

Introduction:

The learning project that I created is designed for a 7th Grade Exploring Music Class. This class is a technology driven music class with an emphasis on music history and appreciation. While it fits into the model of general music, this class is an elective for students who are looking for more of a scholastic and commercial music experience rather than a performance driven environment. Because this class takes place in a music lab, equipped with Apple Mac desktop computers, MIDI Keyboards, and a variety of music software, students are primarily engaged with music through means of the technology that they have presented to them. My unit deals with students learning how to use Finale 2011 Music Notation Software and while exercising a variety of structured and guided composition experiences.

Within this unit students are expected to garner and understanding and fluency in Finale to the point where they can write, create, transcribe, and document music at a level in which it could be read and published for the commercial music industry. Throughout the unit, students will experience a wide range of instructional opportunities that will successively build their knowledge of the program, compositional technique, and basic music theory. Students will be assessed with explicit rubrics for each evaluation they complete. These rubrics outline the expectations and goals that students should accomplish as they progress through the unit.

The objectives of this unit will be measured by student's ability to reflect the content delivered through instruction, within their own creative composition projects. Each project will be objectively assessed in regards to how their mastery of content is demonstrated within each specific project.

Success of the unit and the ability to gauge student achievement will be determined by comparing a variety of benchmark assessments and final unit grades with the Pre-Assessment Scores (P.A.S). Achievement will be analyzed on an individual student, class, and grade-wide basis of performance in both the P.A.S. and final scores for the unit.

The goals for this unit extend beyond the clearly apparent musical value of this course. The broader intent of the unit is to expose students to the ability to learn new software programs in a clear and methodical way. Our students will face technological challenges as they continue in their educational career and professional life. This unit uses musical experiences to provide students with the analytical, problem solving, and critical thinking skills it takes to be independent and productive workers, regardless of content areas they may encounter in the future.

Pre-Assessment:

The unit pre-assessment consists of three main components of which are assigned a numerical value based on formative and summative student performance. Each part of the pre-assessment process deals with specific content areas students will be working with in the unit. Their knowledge of the content is rated on a scale from one to five with the possible total composite score for all three categories being a 15.

The first component is a music theory packet in which students are expected to complete a variety of exercises that demonstrate their knowledge of basic note qualities, time signatures, and rhythmic equivalencies. The goal of this portion of the pre-assessment is to determine what experience and knowledge students have with basic music theory elements, which they will need for composing. The score for this pre-assessment is determined by looking at the number of correctly completed answers/sections of the packet. This section of the rubric is then filled out according to their completion of the document.

Similarly, the second component consists of gauging student's knowledge of music notation in regards to dynamics and expression markings within music. This pre-assessment consists by simply discussing the concept of dynamics and expression with the class and their prior experience in understanding them. The score for this pre-assessment is determined through a structured interview. The numerical value for this portion is determined by assessing student's competency for the given subject matter.

The third component is an activity in which students are expected to research the specific elements of the Finale software and garner a better understanding for the program. Within this alternative form of assessment, students demonstrate ability to research and comprehend the basic information regarding Finale software. The numerical number for this assignment was assigned based off of student's completion of the worksheet.

Any additional comments and information regarding class size and students with special needs or ESL is also documented within the Pre-Assessment Summary for each class.

Unit Description:

The lesson plans and outline for this unit are listed on the following pages. The general progression of the course consists of building student's knowledge of the Finale Program and then utilizing their creativity through the ability to have them compose songs within the program with given guidelines. Initially, students start out with the most basic objectives; opening and closing the program and documents, the process required for saving, setting up document characteristics. Eventually the complexity of each assignment grows exponentially, starting with simply transcribing a handwritten score into digital format. Students are then able to branch out from a compositional perspective, once they have mastered the basic fundamental concepts of how the program works. There are 4 main projects with smaller activities included within the four sequences. By the end of the fourth project, students utilize the entire spectrum of knowledge they have accrued throughout the unit to write for two instruments using a variety of musical ideas and theory, along with select features of the program.

Two main considerations were made within this unit for students with special needs and ESL. For students with special needs, the unit is designed with flexible a timeline for due dates. Students are able to work at their own pace and have a variety of tools from a technological standpoint to facilitate them in their learning. One student in particular had a hearing impairment. In order to universally design this unit, all directions and requirements are written and distributed to the class and displayed on the board. We also use a wireless microphone and voice amplifier that the student gives to the instructor and is connected to a hearing aid, to assist in verbal and aural communication.

For students with ESL, considerations were made in order to pair these students with partners who are able to assist them in completing their work. ESL students were primarily grouped together and were able to collectively work and address issues within the class themselves. Teacher accommodations were made in changing the location of seats for these students to have clear visual lines to the computer projector so that they could follow along with prompts and examples through both oral and visual stimulus.

Please see attached unit outlines and lesson plans for complete lesson sequence and detailed descriptions.

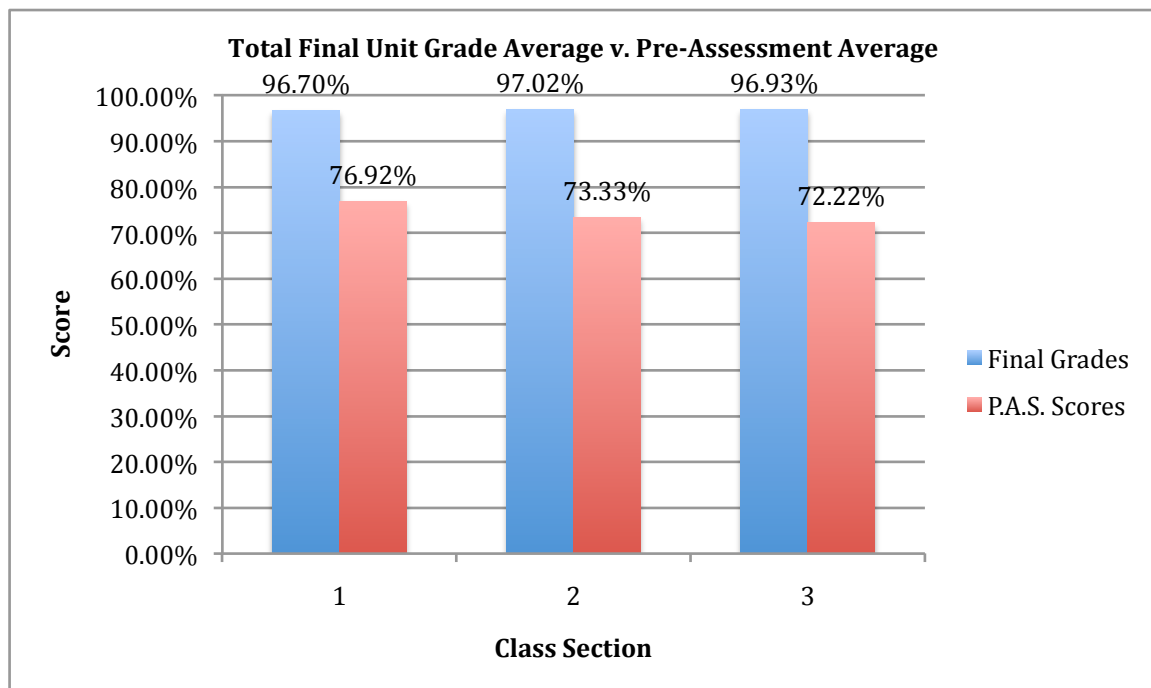
Post-Assessment:

The post assessment for this unit consists of two main elements. The first is the completion of Project 4, which consists of a demonstration of all objectives and goals within the unit. Project 4 required students to demonstrate a variety of skills and knowledge that was continually built upon throughout successful completion of each previous project. The second element used for post-assessment is the calculation of the final unit grade. This percentage indicates student performance throughout the entire unit and is used for the post-assessment evaluation because it captures the holistic perspective in the mastery of the knowledge of the experiences with the Finale Software. The pre-assessment documents were not used as a post-assessment because they would not accurately reflect student’s new knowledge of how to successfully operate and manipulate the Finale Software for the instructional objectives of each project.

Results and Analysis:

Average Final Grade v. Average Pre-Assessment Scores for Sections

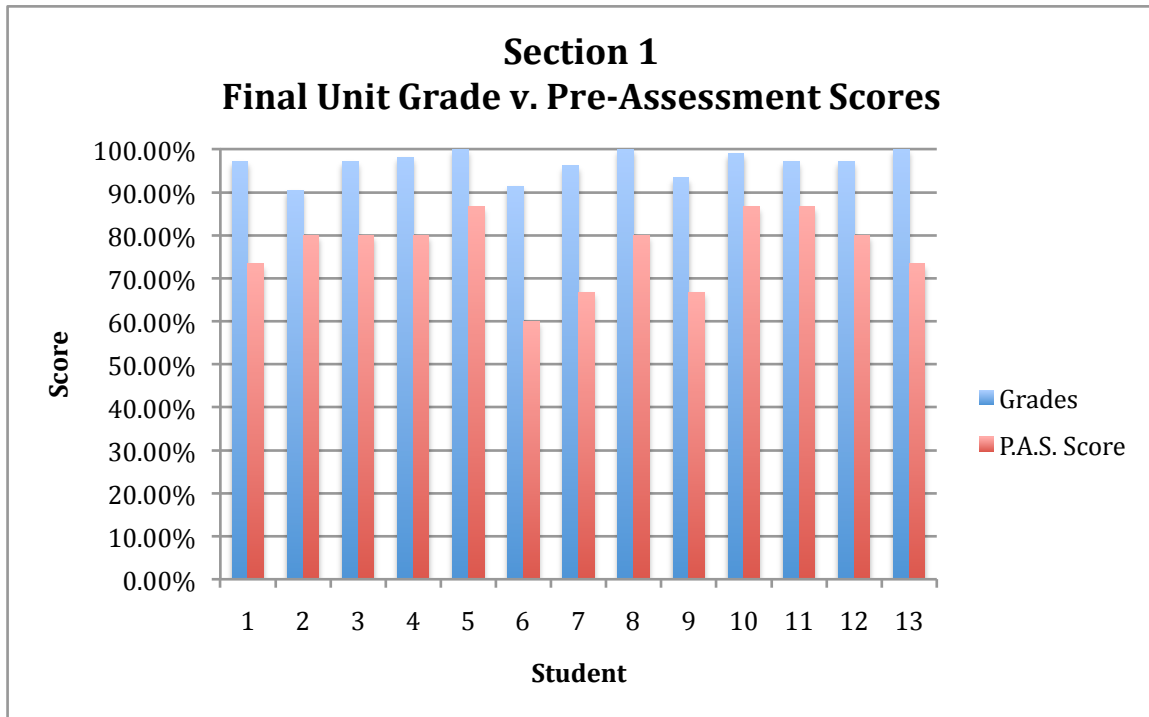
Based off of the results of both the pre and post assessments I can say definitively that students demonstrated positive growth and learning within this unit. In the analysis of the average final grades versus the pre-assessment scores (P.A.S.), it is clear that there is an increase in percentage across all three sections of this course. The average P.A.S. score was in the mid 70% range, which included evaluations in both music theory and prior-knowledge of the Finale software. The Final grades, indicated by the blue column, all fall within the 96-97% range of accuracy for completion of each project. This indicates that within each of the four main projects, the design and implementation of scaffolding of necessary knowledge was appropriate for students to be successful as they navigated through each phase.

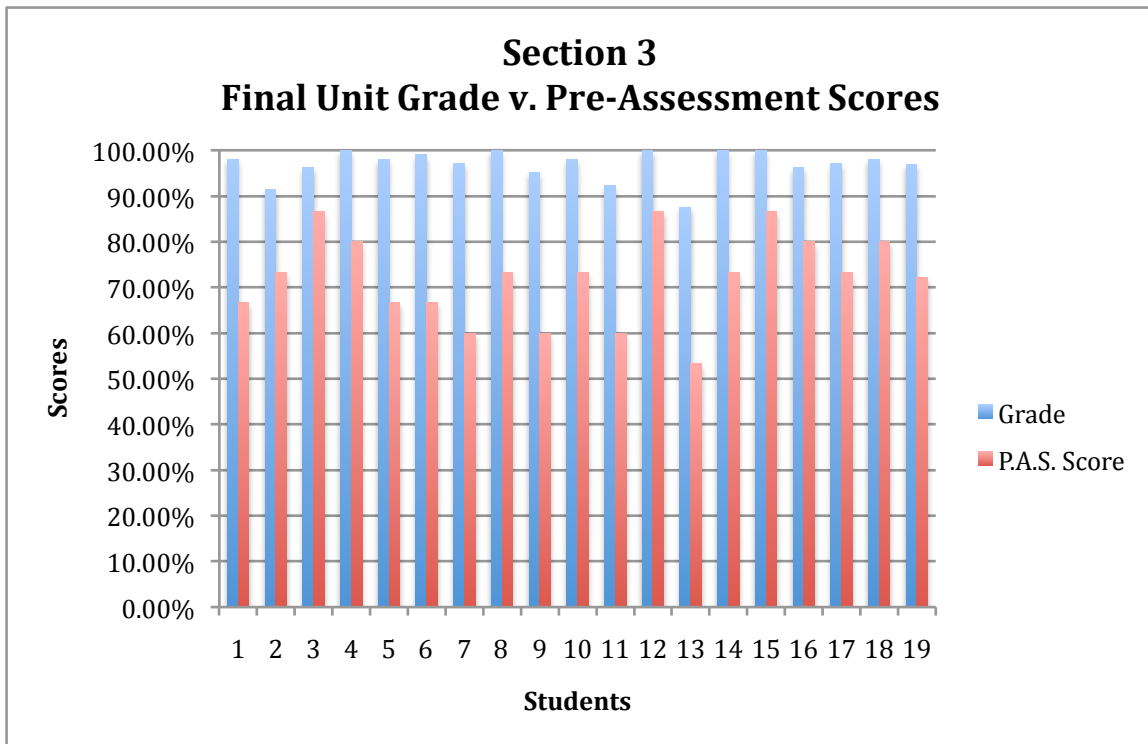
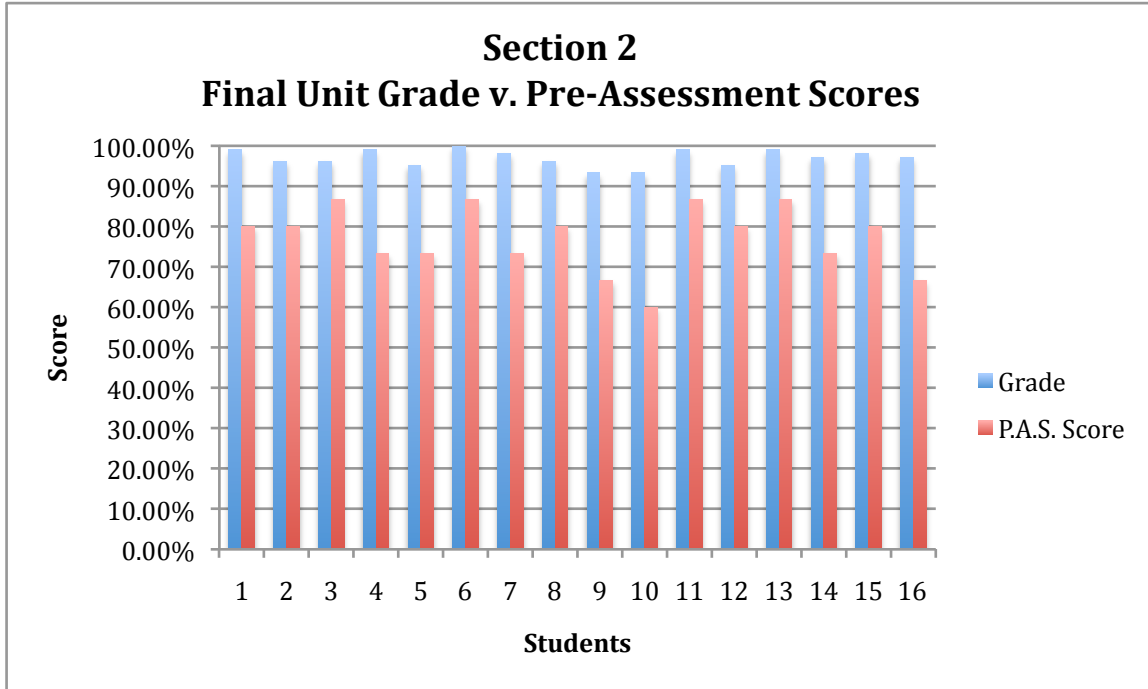


Average Final Grade v. Average Pre-Assessment Scores for Students:

Likewise, an equal correlation is apparent among all students within every section of the course. Pre-assessment evaluations scored significantly lower than all final grade scores. This can be attributed to many of the factors within the pre-assessment, which dealt with specific instructional elements, that students were not exposed to yet, such as dynamics and expression. Many students were able to achieve scores for the Final Unit Grade of close or equal to 100% accuracy. This indicates that students achieved all necessary instructional objectives within each sequence with great attention to detail and accuracy. This also indicates that the objectives of this unit were in the attainable ranges for student achievement, as many could have seemingly been challenged to a greater extent.

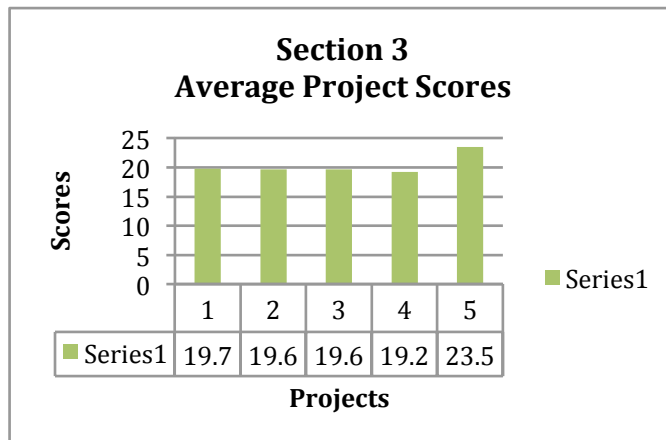
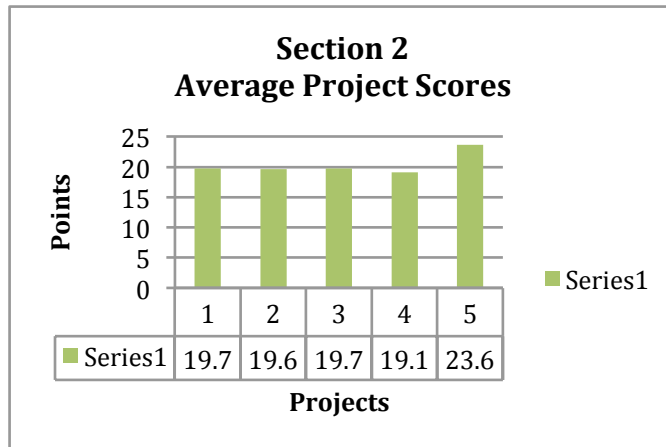
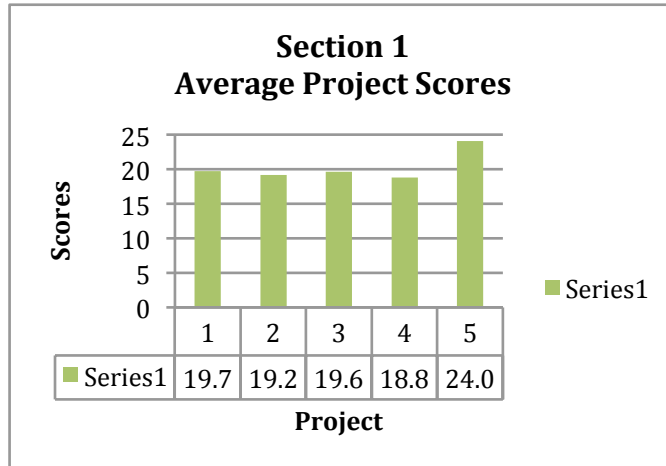
Please see attached graphs for all three sections of this course and analysis of individual student achievement:





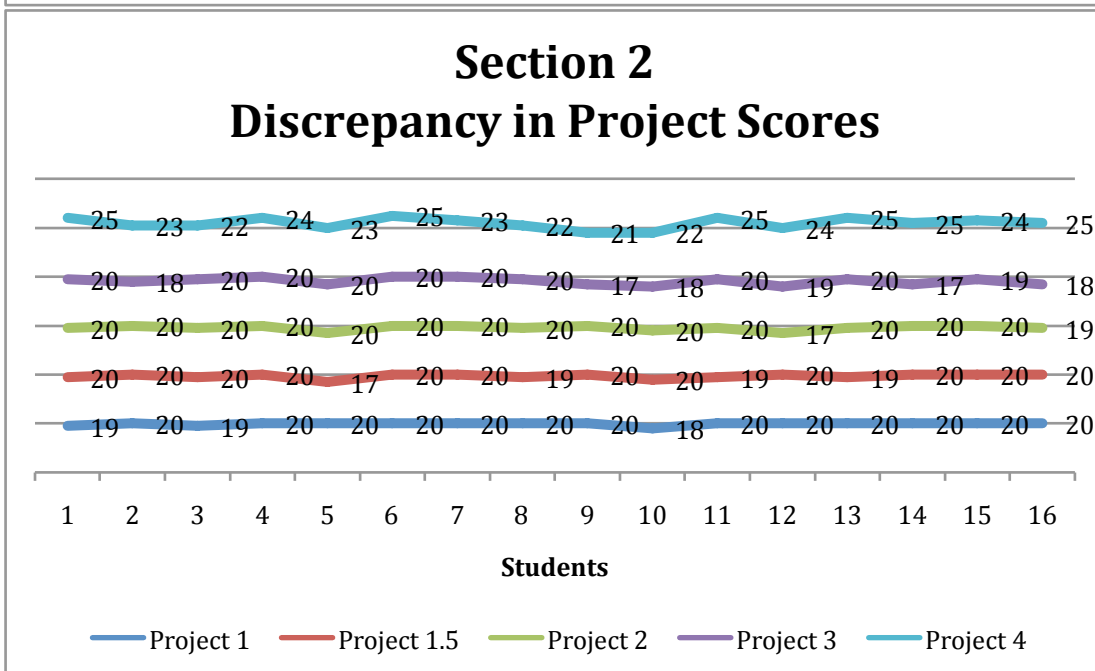
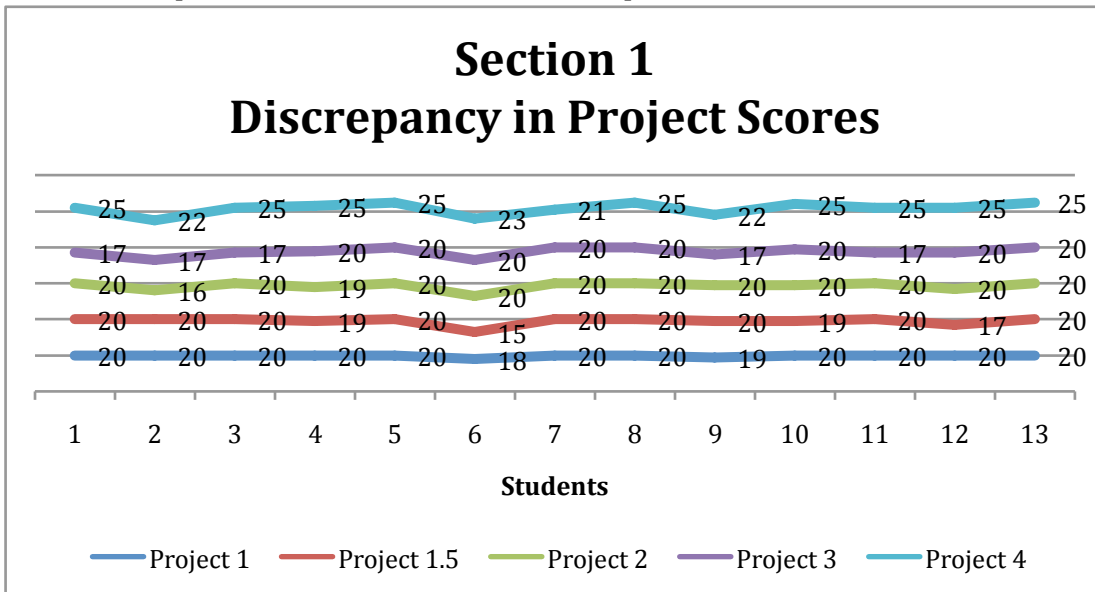
Average Project Scores between Sections:

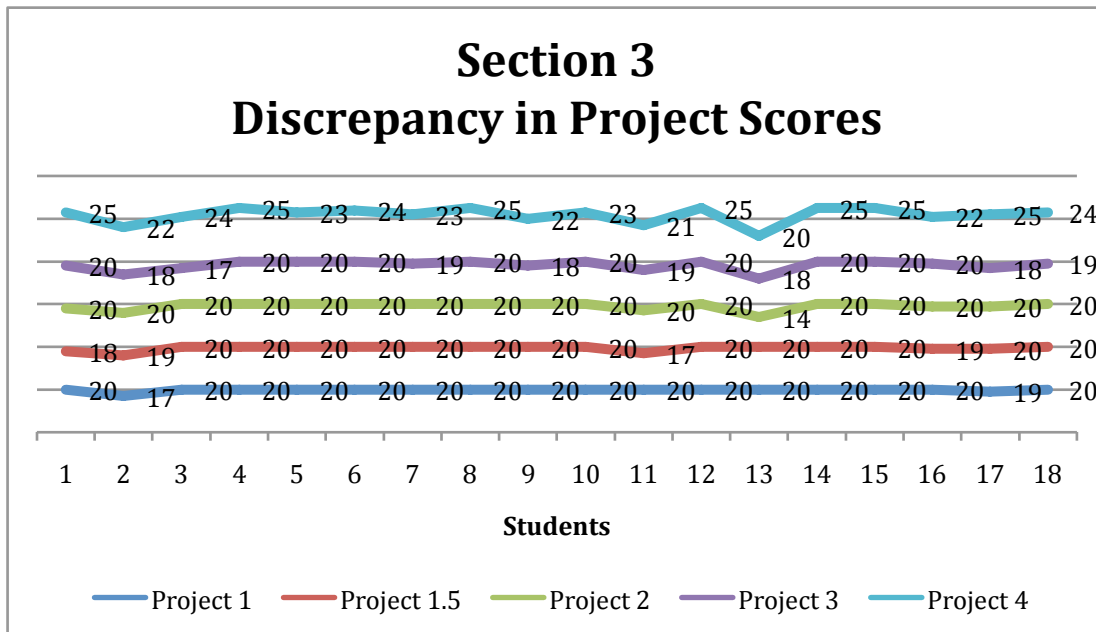
In looking at the trends in average project scores across each section, it is necessary to note that all projects were worth 20 points, with the exception of column 5 (Final Project 4). All classes share similar trends in data, where as the first projects have consistently high and uniform scores. As projects increase in difficulty, the discrepancy in scores increases. This is a trend that is expected to occur as the requirements and expectations increase for each project.



Discrepancy in Project Scores within Sections:

Trends in discrepancy of score within each given class was analyzed to look for continuity of grades. As expected, as difficulty level increases discrepancy in scores across the student population increases. Within each graphic analysis, the variance within each project line correlates with increase in difficulty and expectation of each project. The line with the greatest variance is Project 4, which is the project that requires the most content from students. In contrast, Project 1, which required, one main demonstration of knowledge, shows the least variance. This comparison in discrepancy allows for analysis of the quality of projects and expectations of students. While most scores are high within this unit, these graphic analyses show how student's performed as the demand and expectations increased.





Final Analysis and Conclusions:

Based off of the numerical data collected from this unit, and the reflective analysis of student achievement based on discussions and informal assessment, it is clear that students demonstrated positive growth and learning throughout the unit.

The interesting component of this unit is that the primary forms of qualitative assessment allowed for students to meet selected requirements and receive a passing grade. From quantitative perspective, students often approached the Finale software and rubric based evaluations as a checklist of things to include. Once they completed the required features, students were much more liberal in their compositions. They also continually asked questions that could have been answered by reading assignment directions and worksheets. From this perspective students struggled to gain the independence that they were intended to gain from these independent projects.

Problem solving and analytical skills did increase as we continued throughout each project, and questions always stemmed from new content being learned presently rather than issues stemming from past learning experiences.

If I were to redesign this unit, I would include more structured due dates for these projects. I feel that this would provide a better course flow and overall sense of urgency in completing the projects. The current design of the course allows for students to master content and a more individual pace, and I feel that that this element is indicative in the numerical data and student success. I would like to also better include musical theory and compositional elements, however I think this could be better achieved in another unit that would precede learning how to use the Finale Software.

Overall, students demonstrated and met the unit goals and requirements and can successfully work and use Finale to write, compose, and transcribe music at a level that could be handed to professional musicians to play.