## Jazz at Lincoln Center Essentially Ellington scoring rubrics

Below are the judging categories and adjudication rubrics for the *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival. These provide a detailed narrative to clarify the point scale system used by judges to assess a band's performance. The category "Rhythm Section" has been added to the adjudication form in an effort to recognize its importance as the heart of the band. But please note that the rhythm section is assessed in each of the other categories as well. Some categories used in the past, including "Technique" and "Tone/Intonation," have been combined into a "Basic Musicianship" category -- an attempt to emphasize the other elements of playing jazz, such as "Soloing/Improvisation" and "Interpretation." But since technique is the building block for playing any kind of music, scoring high in any category won't be possible without good technique. Use these descriptions as a general guide, not a list of rigid rules. This is music so some level of subjectivity is inevitable.

Category (General Description)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
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Rating and Score	<u>10-9pts</u>	<u>8-6pts</u>	<u>5-3pts</u>	<u>2-1pts</u>
Soulfulness – Swing, spirit		The main elements of swing are present and mostly uniform in style. Occasionally, lapses in intensity and swing feel take away from the overall unified spirit of the performance.		There is little evidence of an understanding of swing. The performance is stylistically incorrect at times and lacks desirable spirit.
Rhythm Section- Groove, balance, pulse, timekeeping, communication with soloists, swing feel	The rhythm section has excellent groove, balance, pulse and swing feel. They communicate well with and make intelligent adjustments to soloists. Each player fully understands their role within the	The rhythm section has some lapses in groove, balance and/or technique, but overall a good swing feel. There is some communication with soloists but listening could be improved	The rhythm section shows potential but needs to rehearse to improve timekeeping, listening, rhythmic feel and	The rhythm section mostly does not play in time - adversely impacting all other areas of the performance. Much rehearsal is needed to improve balance and technique, as well as better understanding of the roles of each player, to allow for communication with soloists and a good swing feel.
Soloing/Improvisation - Constructing improvisations through harmonic progressions in the style of the piece	improvisations through harmonic progressions. They reflect a knowledge of the style and know	Soloists know how to construct improvisations through harmonic progressions that have melodic quality, but need to develop a better grasp of jazz vocabulary to construct more personal and engaging solos. At times increased communication with the rhythm section is needed so that the solo fits within the overall structure of the piece.	playing the correct harmonic progressions and are not melodically and rhythmically locked in to the feel of the piece, and/or the solo is inappropriate for the overall structure of the piece.	Soloists are not playing the correct harmonic progressions, melodies are not present and/or rhythms are not linked to the feel of the piece. Soloists do not communicate with the rhythm section or demonstrate an understanding of jazz vocabulary.

Interpretation – Expression, stylistic choices, maintaining integrity of the original piece, cohesive ensemble sound, beauty	communicated eloquently and creatively throughout the performance. The integrity of the original piece is well maintained and any changes to the arrangement are stylistically accurate and enhance the performance. The three sections of the band - rhythm, brass and woodwinds - have a connectedness that allows for a full,	through much of the performance.	integrity of the original piece is jeapordized at times and/or changes to the arrangements are not within the correct style. The ensemble's sound is not cohesive	Interpretation of the chart is not clear and not communicated through the performance. The band does not play in the correct style and/or changes to the arrangements detract from the performance. The band need to rehearse to develop its sound and allow for better blending, control, projection and clarity, allowing for a more cohesive, defined ensemble sound.
Basic Musicianship/ Technique – Articulation, precision, intonation, rhythm, attacks, releases, dynamics, accents, tempo, phrasing, blend, control, projection, clarity, melodic line, tone	Dynamics, accents and phrasing are aligned with all sections of the band. Tempo accurately reflects the expression of the piece and tone quality is excellent.	Technical performance is excellent, though a few areas of articulation, precision, rhythm, attacks, and/or releases could be tightened up to provide a more fluid performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing are generally aligned between all sections of the band. Tempo usually reflects the expression of the piece and tone quality is good.	significant improvement to not get in the way and to allow for a more fluid performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing usually are	Too many instances of poor technique and tone quality. Most areas of articulation, precision, rhythm, attacks, and/or releases need significant rehearsal to allow for an improved performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing are not performed with any synchronization between sections. Tempo is either too fast or too slow or fluctuates so that time is inconsistent throughout.