

THE END DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS

Performance Preparation for the Middle School or Young Band

Presented by
Charles R. Jackson, DMA
Assistant Professor of Music
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA (Cobb County)

Art of Teaching Music Summit
Friday, May 31st, 2019

Fulton County Public Schools and
American Youth Ensembles

www.DrCRJackson.com

OVERVIEW

- I. Select appropriate performance literature
- II. Performance accountability for each student
- III. Balance, Blend, Intonation
- IV. Establish a system for assigning parts to members of each section
- V. How much time is needed to prepare performance literature?
- VI. Avoid barriers to success
- VII. Teach sight-reading fundamentals
- VIII. Mature Musical Expression

I. Select Appropriate Performance Literature

Check-list for the selection of appropriate performance literature

- The piece has expressive potential.
- Musical concepts you wish to teach are included in the piece.
- All students are actively engaged.
- There is sufficient rehearsal time during the school day to properly prepare the piece.
If you only have time to "cover" the notes and rhythms, then the piece is too difficult for your group at this point in time.
- The time required to teach the piece allows time to continue teaching and expanding fundamentals, including sight-reading skills.
- The concert literature must not become your curriculum.
Don't bounce from one performance to another.

I. Select Appropriate Performance Literature

The Following Statements are not Educationally Sound:

- We will play everything but don't have time to work on the **correct notes**.
- We will play everything but don't have time to work on the **correct rhythms**.
- We will play everything but don't have time to work on **playing in tune**.
- We will play everything but don't have time to work on **proper balance**.
- We will play everything but don't have time to work on **characteristic tone**.
- We will play everything but don't have time to work on **expression**.

A truly great performance cannot occur
in the absence of one or more of these fundamentals.

II. Performance Accountability for Each Student

- ❖ Develop a system to confirm the success of each student.
- ❖ Assign an academic grade for each performance piece.
- ❖ Use a chart to track progress of the entire band.
- ❖ Use a chart to guide rehearsal lesson plans.
- ❖ Inform students of deadlines for completing all performance material.

(See sample rehearsal grid)

III. Balance, Blend: Top Priority

- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend wrong fingerings.
A wrong note in the correct place is still a wrong note.
- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend a correct note in the wrong place due to inaccurate rhythm.
A correct note in the wrong place becomes a wrong note.
- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend poor tone quality.
- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend incorrect dynamic levels.
- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend incorrect articulations.
- ❖ Not possible to balance and blend inconsistent interpretation of style
(e.g. Swing eighth notes vs. Straight eighth notes)

III. Balance, Blend: Top Priority

- ❖ If balance and blend are the top priority, then ALL other musical concepts will fall into place.
- ❖ Use the Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni approach to building a great band sound. When he created the statue of David, he said all he had to do was to remove all the marble that was not David. David was already within the marble.
- ❖ Remove everything that is not part of an exemplary performance and the exemplary performance will emerge. The exemplary performance already exists, hidden within your ensemble.

IV. Assign Parts to Members in the Ensemble

Choice A:

- ❖ Audition determines chair order
- ❖ Parts are assigned according to chair order
- ❖ 1st sit together, 2nd sit together, 3rd sit together.
- ❖ All strong players on 1st parts

Choice B:

- ❖ Students seated alphabetically
- ❖ Parts are assigned 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.
- ❖ Students seated in trio groups, able to hear all three parts.
- ❖ Each piece, students assigned a different part.
- ❖ Strong players on all parts.

Rotate Parts, Not Seats

IV. Assign Parts to Members in the Ensemble

Percussion assignment charts posted.
Make sure all students play various instruments.

(See samples of percussion assignment charts)

[Percussion Chart 1](#)
[Percussion Chart 2](#)

V. How Much Time is Needed to Prepare Performance Literature?

1. Take into account the number of class days prior to the performance.
2. Take into account the days you WILL NOT see students.
 - A. Standardized test dates
 - B. School-wide assemblies
 - C. Field trips
 - D. Possible inclement weather days.
 - E. Student holidays
3. All pieces should be performance-ready NO LATER than one week prior to the performance date.

VI. Avoid Barriers to Success

Articulation Problems: Public Enemy #1.

Issues with tonguing have a negative impact on the tone quality of EVERY note!

1. Contact point:

- In General, the **Alveolar Ridge** for flute and brass.
- For reeds, in general...
Tip of the Top of the Tongue
on the Bottom of the Tip of the Reed



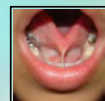
Reeds think "THEW" not "TA"

VI. Avoid Barriers to Success

Help each student achieve a characteristic tone quality and relaxed finger dexterity.

Have physical barriers to success been minimized?

- Embouchure/Mouthpiece compatibility
- Hand size
- Ankyloglossia
- Past surgical procedures
- Polydactylism issues
- Oligodactylism or Ectrodactylism (more common)



VI. Avoid Barriers to Success

Help each student achieve a characteristic tone quality and relaxed finger dexterity.

- ❖ For reed players, check for strength and quality of the reed
 - Compatibility with the facing and tip opening of the mouthpiece
 - Chips, cracks, mildew
 - Reed and ligature, double reed alignment
- ❖ Walk behind the horn section, check right hand
 - Major impact on tone quality and pitch
- ❖ Insist that percussion students focus on tone quality
 - Strike location & proper technique for each instrument
 - Mallet selection



VI. Avoid Barriers to Success

Visual aids to focus air flow & support

The three "ations" of good breath support:

Inhalation followed by *exhalation* with no hesitation.

- Inspiron
- WindMaster
- Balloons
- Breathing bag
- Straws

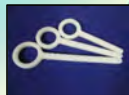


Note: All are a waste of time if skills are not transferred to the instrument.

VI. Avoid Barriers to Success

Visual aids to help identify embouchure issues

- Mouthpiece rims to isolate lip muscles while buzzing (sometimes referred to as embouchure visualizers)



VII. Teach Sight-Reading Fundamentals

Rhythm Problems?

Develop and implement a systematic approach to teaching rhythm

- Count, Clap, Sing, "Piff", Play
- Use written analysis
 - Numbers (1 & 2 &)
 - Arrows (↓↑↓↑)
- Correct notes played in the wrong place become wrong notes.
- Notes in the wrong place can't be tuned with the "new" neighbors.
 - Not possible to blend a note played at the wrong time.
 - Avoid using the "rhythmic approximation" philosophy.

VII. Teach Sight-Reading Fundamentals

Confident meter and tempo changes

Avoid teaching meter and rhythms solely by rote

- To become good sight-readers, students need to know WHY, not just HOW.
- For example, when meter shifts from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{6}{8}$ and the 8th note remains constant.
- If there is no time now to teach it correctly, when will you find time to continue re-teaching it?

VII. Teach Sight-Reading Fundamentals

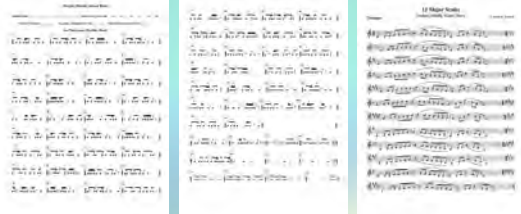
Sight-reading:

Include skill development throughout the year, every year.

- Establish a common and transferrable vocabulary for discussing music-reading skills.
- Help students understand and feel comfortable with all key signatures.
- Help students understand the relationship between note/rest values and the impact the time signature has on this relationship.
- Help students become highly sensitive to all musical markings surrounding the notes.

VII. Teach Sight-Reading Fundamentals

H. Sight-reading: The only the sheets of paper you will ever need



VIII. Mature Musical Expression

G. Expression: Music's "Super Power"

Don't build a mansion, then tear out the walls and floors to add electricity and plumbing!

- Rehearse expression into the music as students learn the piece.
- You must deconstruct the performance to add expression later.
- Adding it later requires building new muscle memory.
- "Later" never comes! Much like a "round tuit"
- All the right notes, all the right rhythms, with no expression equals no music.
- If the time needed to learn notes and rhythms leaves no time to teach expression, then the piece is too difficult for your ensemble.

VIII. Mature Musical Expression

Ask yourself...

1. Are my students performing advanced literature?
OR
2. Are my students performing with advanced musicianship?

Regardless of the graded level of the piece, the answer to question #2 should always be YES!

The Preparation Process THE END DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS

Musical Life After Middle School

- Confidence, perceived personal success, and positive experiences in middle school should catapult students into the high school band.
- Conversation at the dinner table and tennis courts about experiences in the high school band should encourage and welcome students in the middle school band to continue.
- The high school director should not need to **introduce** students to the fundamentals of characteristic tone quality, articulation, expression, music reading strategies, rehearsal etiquette, proper posture and hand position, and shouldn't need to **introduce** a **new** key signature. He/she is required to continue reinforcing.



Guide to Teaching Woodwinds
By Frederick W. Westphal
Fifth Edition

Resources

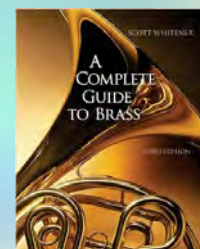


Teaching Woodwinds:
A Method and Resource
Handbook for
Music Educators
By William Dietz

RESOURCES

A Complete Guide to Brass

by Scott Whitener



Resources



Teaching Music Through Performance in Middle School Band
By
Gary Barton, Erin Cole, Chip DeStefano
Charles R. Jackson, Susan Taylor, Scott Tomlison
Marguerite Wilder



The Band Director's Book of Secrets
By
Charles R. Jackson

THE END DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS

**Performance Preparation
for the
Middle School
or
Young Band**

Presented by
Charles R. Jackson, DMA
Assistant Professor of Music
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA (Cobb County)

Art of Teaching Music Summit
Friday, May 31st, 2019

*Fulton County Public Schools and
American Youth Ensembles*

www.DrCRJackson.com