

Are We Barking Up the Wrong Tree?

Practical Program Planning & Rehearsal Strategies

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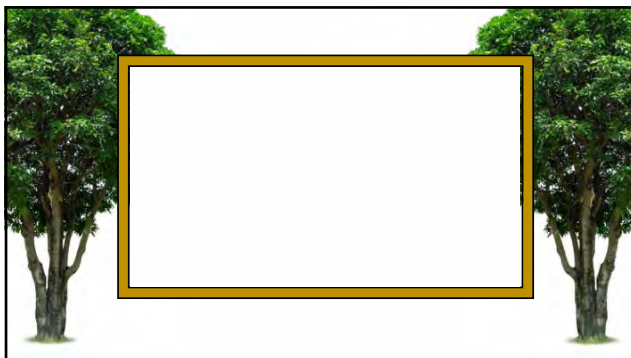
Art of Teaching Music Summit
 Friday, May 31st, 2019

Fulton County Public Schools and American Youth Ensembles

www.DrCRJackson.com

Idiom: Barking up the wrong tree

Meaning: To do, consider, or pursue something wrong.



Barking Up the Wrong Tree
OVERVIEW

- I. Instrument Assignment Process
- II. Main objectives for learning scales
- III. "Passing off" lines in a method book
- IV. Concerts serve as the main drive behind the curriculum
- V. Typical yearly schedule
- VI. Accomplishments by the end of the school year
- VII. Entering the high school band: Preparation Level

I. Instrument Assignment Process

Ask yourself these questions:

- Who decides which instrument the student should select?
- Should a team of guest educators be involved in the assessment process?
- Do students pick which instrument they want without guidance?

NOTE: A guided process usually results in students being more successful and results in students staying involved with the program longer.


I. Instrument Assignment Process

Hypothetical Situation:

- Recruit as many 6th grade students as possible (e.g. 150 students)
- Students are allowed to play any instrument they want.
- Instrumentation is not balanced... a problem that will carry through high school.
- Many students try to play an instrument that is not compatible with their embouchure.
- Students drop band due to their perceived lack of success.

Final Result:

- Only 70 students remain going into the 7th grade.
- Only 50 students remain going into the 8th grade.
- Only 20 continue in the high school program (10 flutes, 6 percussion, 4 trumpets)

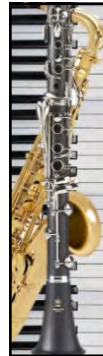


I. Instrument Assignment Process

Another Hypothetical Situation:

- A team of educators assist in testing students on instruments.
- Members of this team are not communicating with each other during the process.
- At the end of the process, you end up with 20 saxophones, 24 percussionists, 22 trumpets, 3 clarinets, 4 flutes, 1 euphonium, no trombones, and no tubas.


Good luck finding published literature for this ensemble!




II. Main objectives for learning scales

The four (4) All-State scales become the focus of scale study during the middle school years.

F Concert
B^b Concert
E^b Concert
A^b Concert




The students playing Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, and percussion will enter high school having never seen a scale with even one sharp.



III. "Passing off" lines in the method book

- Lines are passed off even if the students are not tonguing.
- Lines are passed off with improper hand position and posture.
- Lines are passed off without characteristic tone.
- Often it is just the notes and rhythms that are close to correct.

Students learn to place value and importance on what the teacher values.




IV. Concerts serve as the main drive behind the curriculum

Your curriculum should not be simply hopping from one concert to the next.

Common problems with mainly using concert literature to drive the curriculum:


- Does not equalize technical development for all sections.
- Does not equalize range development.
- Does not equalize rhythmic challenges.
- Does not provide equal opportunity for all to play melodic material.



V. Typical yearly schedule

If all grade level bands perform on the same evening for each concert, then a typical year for a middle school band could look like this:

- **September:**
Each band prepares 2 or 3 selections for an October concert
- **October/November:**
Each band prepares 2 or 3 pieces for a Christmas concert
- **December:**
The week before the Christmas break spent watching Disney blu-ray movies. (see warning on next slide)



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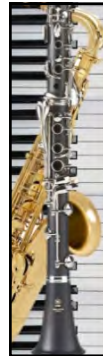
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V. Typical yearly schedule

- **January/February:**
Each band prepares 3 LGPE selections
- **Standardized Testing week:**
No class
- **Spring break:**
No class
- **April:**
Each band prepares 2 or 3 very easy selections for the spring concert
- **May:**
Preparing for the Disney trip
- **Last week of school watching Disney Blu-rays**




VI. Accomplishments by the end of the school year

- Students have learned to play 8 (maybe 12) pieces of music.
- All music was in the same key as the four All-State scales.
- Tuba students are out playing professional gigs because they can play the notes B-flat and F.



VII. Entering the high school band: Preparation Level

- Over half of the band on instruments that are not compatible with their natural embouchure.
- Very few perform with characteristic sounds.
- No one exposed to more than four key signatures.
- Students unable to analyze and understand new and unfamiliar rhythmic patterns.
- Excessive rote teaching of music beyond their level of understanding has led to poor sight-reading skills.
- Students are not aware of how to rehearse efficiently or how to practice at home.
- Brass range is limited.




VII. Entering the high school band: Preparation Level

- Some students unable to tongue properly or at all.
- Some brass and flute players are being sent to the high school program with ankyloglossia because the director never checked.
- Students have completed three years of study and are still not independent, functionally literate, and expressive musicians.
- The first year or two in high school must be spent learning what was not taught in middle school BEFORE the skills and concepts in the high school curriculum can be presented.

**We have spent three years
*Barking Up the Wrong Tree.***


We have missed the target.

**Practical Program Planning &
Rehearsal Strategies**

OVERVIEW

- I. Instrument Assignment Process
- II. Main Objective for Learning Scales
- III. Important Concepts & Skills: Start on Day #1
- IV. Suggested Rehearsal Strategies
 - How to enter the room & Rehearsal etiquette
 - Warm-up considerations
 - Rhythmic Analysis
 - Scale Study & Sightreading Skills
 - Rehearsing Literature
 - Tuning
 - The Metronome
- V. Accomplishments by the End of the School Year

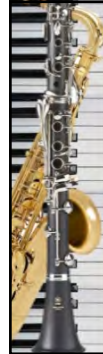


I. Instrument Assignment Process

Guided instrument selection should be based on research and common sense.

Check for physical barriers


- ❖ Ankyloglossia
- ❖ Past polydactylism
- ❖ Oligodactylism
- ❖ Mouthpiece compatibility with the student's vermilion, philtrum, and dental structure.



I. Instrument Assignment Process


Guide the student (and parent) toward the selection of a compatible instrument while maintaining good instrumentation.

- ❖ Members of a band are not just studying privately.
- ❖ Instrumentation determines ability to perform literature as intended by the composer.
- ❖ Instrumentation must maintain over 7 years.
- ❖ Students and parents must understand that the band student is on a team that will stay together for 7 years.
- ❖ Everyone on a football team cannot be quarterbacks.



I. Instrument Assignment Process


- ❖ Have as few people as possible involved in the instrument assignment process.
- ❖ Maintain a high level of communication between these individuals during the process.
- ❖ Identify which high school a student will attend and attempt to build a strong instrumentation for all high schools in your cluster.
- ❖ Failure to project instrumentation for the high school band will cripple efforts to adequately cover the high school curriculum.



II. Main Objective for Learning Scales

All students learn all letters of the alphabet. Likewise, they should learn all scales!

- ❖ Aim for at least 6 scales by the end of 6th grade – F, Gb, G, Ab, A, Bb concert.
- ❖ Cover all 12 major scales by the end of 7th grade.
- ❖ Expand all 12 major scales in the 8th grade by increasing speed, adding range, and adding memorization.




III. Important Concepts & Skills: Start on Day #1

Establish proper tone quality from the very beginning of 6th grade. Students can learn grown-up math (2+2=4), so teach them grown-up tone.

Teach tonguing ASAP or student will invent their own way to create rhythm and the world will not be a happy place.

Insist on proper posture and hand position because those concepts lead to mastery of advanced technique.

Insist on proper rehearsal etiquette from day #1.




IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Entering the Room (Teach Rehearsal Etiquette)

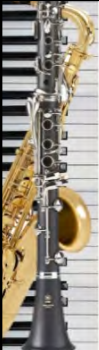
- No questions until after the warm-up unless a student is sick, cut, hurt, or bleeding.
- Don't allow students to delay the beginning of instruction.
- Allow teacher to effectively monitor students.
- Listening sample for the day is playing as students enter.
- Samples of characteristic sound for each instrument and for full band.
- Throw in some choral and orchestral samples.
- Rehearsal plan projected in front of room.
 - Include complete order of rehearsal.
 - Post birthdays of students for the day or week.
 - Announcements.

Bass Mouthpiece buzzing exercise (link to mouthpiece buzz)

- Brass warm-up on mouthpieces while woodwinds soak reeds and assemble instruments.
- Brass warm-up while percussion set up equipment for rehearsal.




(QR Code for Mouthpiece Buzz)



IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Full Band Warm-Up (link to warm-up)

- First 5 measures: Balance and blend unison pitch, major chord, cluster.
- Continue with material that is beneficial for each instrument.
- Cover variations in dynamics and articulation.
- Cover triplets and 6/8 time.




(QR Code for Warm-up)

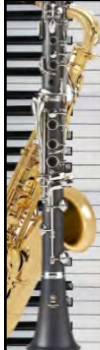
Rhythmic Analysis (Link to Rhythmic Analysis Sheet)

Joe Benymen Rhythm Sheet (work through about 2 exercises per day)

- Write in down-beat and up-beat arrows (↑) and numbers (e.g. 1+2e+a3+4).
- Tap foot on pulse, count arrows and numbers aloud.
- Tap foot on pulse, clap and count (arrows & numbers) aloud.
- Play and sing on a unison pitch (use "thew" syllable for alveolar ridge).
- Play and sing on a major chord.
- Play and sing on a minor chord.
- Play and sing with changing chords.




(QR Code for Rhythm Sheet)



IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Scale Study (link to scale sheet & scale analysis sheet)


- Teach scales in a chromatically adjacent order.
- Scale 2 on the sheet is B concert.
- Removes the perception that the scales at the top of the sheet are "easy" and the scales at the bottom of the page are "hard".
- Cover ALL 12 major scales before the end of 7th grade.
- Expand range and speed in the 8th grade. Work on memorization.
- Easy to introduce all three forms of each relative minor key.
- DO NOT JUST TEACH THE SCALES REQUIRED FOR THE ALL-STATE AUDITION.



(QR Code for Scale Sheet)

Sight-reading Skills

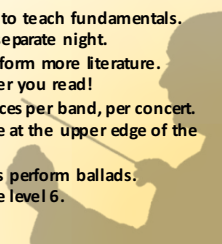
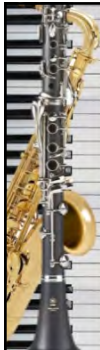
The combined study of the rhythm sheet and the scale sheet will solidify concepts and skills required to become a fluent sight-reader.



IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Rehearsing Literature
(refer to the rehearsal grid from the Performance Preparation presentation)



- Pick literature that allows time to teach fundamentals.
- Have each band perform on a separate night.
 - Allows for each band to perform more literature.
 - The more you read the better you read!
- Aim for a minimum of 7 pieces per band, per concert.
- Not all selections need to be at the upper edge of the students' ability level.
- Even professional orchestras perform ballads.
- Not all selections need to be level 6.

IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Tune regularly (with and without a tuning device)


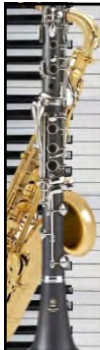
- Train the students' ears!
- Teach students to listen, compare pitch, and adjust.
- Use a tuning device to CONFIRM the band is in tune. Students must know what being IN TUNE sounds like BEFORE they can recognize when they ARE NOT in tune.
- Stop using the the students' EYES to tune. Don't stare at a tuner.
- Match a drone pitch.
- Tune using an band instrument with good tone as the pitch generator.

IV. SUGGESTED REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Using a Metronome

- Teach students to internalize the pulse.
- FYI- Some of the world's greatest musicians tap their foot.
- AVOID having the metronome constantly amplified during rehearsals.
- Periodically, STOP conducting, step off the podium, and make the students listen to each other to maintain pulse and tempo on their own.
- Don't be anchored to your metronome.

V. Accomplishments by the end of middle school

- Students have learned to play 21 (maybe more) pieces of music.
- Concert literature can be in ANY key.
- Majority of students are on instruments that ARE compatible with their natural embouchure.
- Majority of students perform with characteristic sounds.
- ALL are exposed to ALL key signatures.
- Students can INDEPENDENTLY analyze and understand new and unfamiliar rhythmic patterns.
- Incredibly advanced sight-reading skills.
- Students rehearse efficiently and know how to practice at home.
- Brass range is advanced.



VII. Entering the high school band: Preparation Level

- ALL students ARE ABLE to tongue properly.
- THERE ARE NO BRASS or FLUTE STUDENTS being sent to the high school program with ankyloglossia.
- Students have completed three years of study and HAVE BECOME independent, functionally literate, and expressive musicians.
- The high school band director has no limits to creating an advanced band curriculum.

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