

Teaching Music with a Purpose: 25 Ways to improve your band tomorrow.

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Purpose of a rehearsal: “working hard to get better.”

- Effort is the most overrated trait in predicted success. Effort by itself is a terrible predictor of outcome because inefficient outcome is detrimental to morale because sometimes maximum effort produces no results.
- “If you work really hard, you can play this part. If you practice harder, you’ll get this passage right.”
- Don’t mistake activity with achievement.

Tone

- Teach characteristic tone better and earlier.
- When was the first time YOU heard a characteristic sound on your instrument?
 - Most people answer college.
- If you didn’t hear anybody talk, how would your voice sound in college?
- **Can’t describe tone of an instrument in words to someone who has never heard it. (Have YOU ever heard bright or dark?)**
- Listen to it as they come in and out of room (don’t have to take time out of class).
- Without a characteristic tone, no other element of technique can work.

Posture

- Make sure kids understand goal.
 - Have you ever sat in a rehearsal and played the same passage 13 times and wondered why?
- Both feet on floor, back away from chair (walk around room until everyone has it right).
- Explain it to them, then make it into a movement (pat leg, makes kids sit up).
- If we learn in order, we’ll never not finish it (feet on floor, back off of chair).
- **Classical conditioning** (can’t even stop selves from sitting up).
- “Say it twice and never say it again.”

Breathing

- Don’t teach breathing.
- Little kids don’t know what’s happening in abdomen, high schoolers too lazy.
- As my hand goes down, blow out five million birthday candles (don’t breathe).
 - You’re under the ocean (100, 50, 20, 10, 5 feet)—break the surface and take a deep breath (breathe or die). Will automatically be a diaphragm breath.
- Resistance: hissing/sizzling (waste of time—air just leaking out of mouth, doesn’t engage diaphragm).
 - Have them crescendo while they hiss to engage diaphragm.
 - First person to breathe stops clock, record on whiteboard (competition).

Tonguing

- “Energize the airstream,” not “interrupting airstream.”
- Bar straw and paper, paper has to stay up for as long as possible.
- Energy more air through the straw to teach tonguing (paper should stay up during tonguing)—VISUAL.

Tuning

- Rotational tuning
- Have student give tuning pitch, then point baton in a radius around the room. When stick points at you, you play the quarter note as a solo. Gives a more accurate evaluation of tuning, because there are safety in numbers.
- Same articulation, tone, volume.
- Point more to the areas that are more out of tune.
- Thins out texture enough to students can hear themselves.
- Bending pitch
- Have kids bend pitch to practice tuning (purposely make kids go out of tune)

Singing in rehearsal

- Have kids hum so “nobody knows they’re not cool.”
- Have them hum loud and then suddenly have them sing on “la.”

Using a tuner

- Train kids to use a tuner with their eyes closed.
- Trains ear.

Scales

- Tune vertically AND horizontally.
- Using drones WITH slow scales to train ear to tune intervals.
- Use Curwen hand signs (they also teach us note tendencies)

Rhythm

- Rhythms usually aren’t wrong—internal subdivisions are.
- Have them clap softly with fingers on one hand, and then audiated that subdivision.

Lip slurs and buzzing

- Method books: have one instrument buzz while everyone else plays.

Know when fatigue is the problem

- Have students play every other couple measures.
- Put in initials by where you play

Teach use of no breath mark

- Dotted line

Make shorthand signals for own pet peeves (saves talking, yelling).

- Ex. Key signature reminders

Stand at door and greet students if they come in

Change setup

- Circle rehearsal
- Make aisles
- Flip room around
- Break routine

Say things in five words or less

Videotape yourself

- Get third clarinet part and play along with your own tape!

Try new things: The man who can’t dance thinks the band is no good!

I’ve never understood a bar of music in my life, but I’ve felt every one of them.

