

# ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES WHILE TEACHING BEGINNING WIND INSTRUMENTS

## I. Organization and Accountability

- A. Refers to both students and teachers, and are of equal value
- B. Most organizational problems of any nature are usually caused by procedural things not taught correctly—or effectively—during the beginning year.
- C. Three parts of a class
  1. The first part of class should be very structured and almost in outline form, and must remain the same every day.
  2. The middle part of class should vary from day to day.
  3. The last part of class should be very structured and almost in outline form, and must remain the same every day.

## II. Correspondence

- A. Establish contact with parents before their children are actually in your program.
- B. Through your correspondence, the following things are already established:
  1. information about the music company and its services
  2. procedures in which “late” parents go to the music store
  3. when/ how instruments and maintenance kits are delivered to your band hall
  4. practice sheet information and expectations
  5. concert information

## III. Correspondence After School Has Started

- A. Teach the process in which students go through correspondence in class.
- B. Topics covered in first week correspondence:
  1. concert information and dress
  2. extra rehearsals prior to concert and why necessary
  3. list of specific classes and their instructor
  4. teaching objectives
  5. grading procedures
  6. practice sheet with consequences for “problems”
  7. band hall rules
  8. tardy policy
  9. maintenance kit supply list
  10. the importance of mirrors

#### IV. Classroom Set-Up

- A. Semicircle with enough space in between chairs for you to easily have access to the front/back of a student
- B. Rows in block style with enough space in between chairs for you to easily have access to the front/back of a student

#### V. Apportioning of Class Time

- A. Importance of beginning class on time
- B. Attention span of students
- C. Allow students time to assemble, disassemble and clean instruments as part of class time.
- D. Segments of your class can be devoted to:
  1. theory
  2. rhythm
  3. body/posture
  4. how air is used/breathing
  5. sound production
  6. instrument carriage
  7. hand position
  8. instrument maintenance
  9. articulation
- E. How to divide class time depending on the length of your class
- F. Teaching the instrument is the most important concept
  1. you – and the student—need to know what the embouchure looks like when it is correct
  2. you—and the student—need to know what the instrument is supposed to sound like when it is correct
  3. impress upon students that they have to learn how to play their instrument before they learn how to play music

#### VI. Posture

- A. Students should stand first, and then sit so that their upper body feels the same.
  1. sit as you stand concept
  2. shoulders, head and legs are all balanced under the shoulders
- B. Have students walk around the room.
- C. Difference between playing posture and regular posture

**PART OF BEING READY TO PLAY IS STUDENTS “FINDING THEIR PLAYING POSTURE,” BREATHING--AND THEN PLAYING.**

## VII. Breathing

- A. Breathing should be as natural as when students breathe through their nose.
- B. Think of breathing as water filling a glass (from the bottom to the top).
- C. When air starts it is:
  1. below the ribcage
  2. to the seat of the chair
- D. Feel cool air going over the tongue when breathing.
- E. Do not try to control the air too soon.
- F. If you can see the chest move up the first time they breathe, then the chest must always be up.
- G. The final step is creating an air speed that will create the vibration you wish for tone production.

## VIII. Music Theory

- A. Musical alphabet
- B. Clef signs determine the name and placement of the lines and spaces.
- C. Grand staff and the importance of teaching to all beginners, regardless of what instrument they are playing
- D. Note name contests
- E. Sharps, flats, and enharmonics
- F. Key signature and the process by which students should be able to verbalize chants

## IX. Pulse

- A. Introduce pulse first--then musical symbols
- B. Rests vs. notes
  1. "Silence" is a better word than "rest."
  2. Silence should be taught with as much importance as sound.
  3. Silence is active.
  4. Sounds are always started in the same way—and are always followed by other sounds or silence.
- C. Time Signatures
  1. the top number controls the movement of pulse across the bar line
  2. the bottom number controls the number of pulses the musical symbols receive
- D. Caution of teaching rhythms just in 4/4 time

## **X. Initial Sound Production**

- A. Teaching the instrument is the most important concept.
  - 1. You -- and the student -- need to know what the embouchure is supposed to look like when it is correct.
  - 2. You -- and the student -- need to know what the instrument is supposed to sound like when it is correct.
  - 3. Impress upon students that they have to learn how to play their instrument before they learn how to play music.
  - 4. Get air past the vibrating area in the body, through the larynx.
- B. Modeling sounds for the class
- C. Playing along with class is not recommended
- D. Dealing with heterogeneous classes

**BE SURE STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THE VOWEL THEY ARE THINKING IN THEIR BRAINS CONTROLS THE COLOR AND RESONANCE OF THE SOUND OF THEIR INSTRUMENT.**

## **XI. Articulation**

- A. Danger in teaching articulation too soon
- B. Counting and clapping with pulse
- C. Air against hand
- D. In single reed classes, use forefingers to demonstrate the reed and the tongue.
  - 1. tongue moves up and down, not back and forth
  - 2. tongue stays down more than it stays up
  - 3. tongue touches the vibrating reed in the same way it touches when speaking
- E. Articulation concepts for everyone
  - 1. students articulate on their instruments the same way as they vocalize a hard consonant
  - 2. in music we use "tee" and "dee"
  - 3. tongue touches the same place with the same strength every time
  - 4. fast vs. quick

## **XII. Fingerings**

- A. After instrument is put together, students learn how to:
  - 1. hold it
  - 2. place fingers in the correct hand position
  - 3. move fingers in different combinations in order to create different pitches
- B. Always teach fingerings once note recognition skills are at a very high level.

**EVERYTHING YOU DO WHILE PLAYING RELATES TO HOW YOUR BODY NATURALLY FUNCTIONS, AND HOW YOU COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE WHEN YOU SPEAK OR SING.**

### **XIII. Playing Tests**

- A. Avoid using the word “test”; perhaps use the words “skills” or “evaluation”
- B. Playing vs. chair tests
- C. Students need to know what your expectations are and what they are being evaluated on besides notes and rhythms:
  1. posture
  2. embouchure formation
  3. breathing
  4. hand position/finger movement
  5. sound production
  6. instrument carriage
  7. positioning while others are playing

**IF YOU STOP RESPONDING TO EVERYTHING YOUR STUDENTS DO, YOUR TEACHING BECOMES INEFFECTIVE!!**

**IF YOU DO NOT TALK ABOUT AND REINFORCE THESE CONCEPTS DAILY, YOU ARE SETTING UP FUTURE PROBLEMS!!**

**EACH TIME A STUDENT PERFORMS ANY FUNDAMENTAL SKILL OR MUSICAL IDEA, RESPOND TO EACH INDIVIDUAL WITH SOMETHING POSITIVE--AND THEN WITH SOMETHING TO WORK TOWARDS IMPROVING. MAKE SURE EVERY STUDENT HAS SOMETHING POSITIVE SAID ABOUT THEM EVERY DAY--ALONG WITH SOMETHING TO WORK TOWARDS IMPROVING EVERY DAY.**

### **XIV. Method Books**

- A. Do not solely rely on the book—supplemental exercises and handouts must be used as well.
- B. Procedure for learning a new line:
  1. count and clap
  2. say or verbalize note names
  3. play

**YOU CANNOT TEACH A NEW LINE PLUS A NEW CONCEPT AT THE SAME TIME—IT IS TOO MUCH INFORMATION!!**

### **XV. Having Materials**

- A. STUDENTS LEARN ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS FROM THEIR TEACHERS!!
- B. Binders
- C. Music stands
- D. Mirrors

**XVI. Practice Sheets**

- A. Expectations are both verbal and written:
1. must be filled out in pen at home – not in class
  2. parents not allowed to sign ahead of time
  3. parent initials not allowed—name must be written out
  4. no signing of other “sheets” of paper
  5. have a quick system of checking practice cards
  6. have parents do conversion of hours and minutes
  7. writing assignments/reduced grades
  8. staple them in method books

**XVII. Winter Concert**

- A. Do not put students in an unsuccessful “Winter Concert” performance situation, just because you “have to have a Winter Concert”.
- B. If full band pieces are not appropriate by December, it is perfectly acceptable for each individual class to play a line out of their book.

**XVIII. Miscellaneous Topics**

- A. Establishing procedure for learning warm-up exercises and/or lines out of the book
- B. Placement of instruments while positioning
- C. “Rest/relax position” should be rare.
- D. Importance of individual mirrors, music stands and music being utilized
- E. Teaching unified way of marking music

**XIX. Ways To Monitor What Is Going On In Classes Taught By Other Staff Members**

**XX. Importance Of Having Clinicians/Mentors Working With Your Beginning Classes**