

# Developing Excellence in the Small School's Band Program

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## Recruiting and Retention

Everyone wants to be a part of success—Create a “smoke screen” if necessary, while you work behind the “screen” to make reality match the illusion.

Sincerely care about the students, their development, and their well-being—but don't be too understanding.

Elementary Recruiting:

Get to know the elementary students and their parents

Sell the elementary teachers on the program and they will recruit for you

Use 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> graders to demonstrate the instruments when recruiting

Administer an aptitude test to all 5<sup>th</sup> graders, then invite all to join

Work to entice the class leaders and popular students into the program (create the “cool” environment)

Be visible in the community (develop respect)

Create a positive atmosphere for learning, creating, achieving

Praise and Reward Accomplishments (Begin with Extrinsic motivation while working to develop Intrinsic)

Develop a balanced instrumentation through “influential” recruiting and/or by convincing students to switch

Communicate high expectations but carefully balance challenge to ability

Be so enthusiastic that you are contagious

## Administrative Issues

Be organized

Communicate

Develop the support of administration, colleagues, parents, community & students

Schedule music students first, then the rest of the school

Time Management:

Delegate non-music issues to student leaders and parents

Take care of issues of immediate need

Take care of issues of long-term importance

Exercise and Rest

Focus on Music

## Provide Role Models for Musical Apprenticeships

Private Lessons, clinics, and conferences (for you and your students)

Bus students to nearest University for Private Lessons or Group Lessons

University students carpool to your school

High School students teach Middle School students

Music Teachers and/or Church Musicians teach before or after school and/or on weekends

Weekly or Bi-weekly sectionals/master classes

Rotating Sectional schedule within the school day

“Conservatory Days”

Master class videos – published or from local Universities

Magazines, Research journals, Recordings, Books, Internet, Networking, and “Distance Learning”

## Pedagogical techniques

**To correct technical difficulties** -- eliminate everything that is not the issue, solve, rebuild

1. Isolate and work on each element independently and then combine in various ways
2. Change the rhythm
3. Change the articulations
4. Sing the passage (finger silently)
5. Edit if necessary for performance (only after all other attempts have failed)
  - A. Re-assign solos or rescoring to improve balance
  - B. Re-write dynamics for balance
  - C. Change articulations or divide rhythms to improve clarity in fast technique
  - D. "Klangfarbenize" large leaps to simplify
6. Apply an audible rhythmic subdivision (percussion or vocal "sizzle", etc.)
7. Re-score or substitute instruments to cover all crucial musical material: Bar Sax = Bassoon, etc.

**Memory** -- retention can be increased by the use of the following methods:

1. Emphasize the usefulness and purpose of the material being learned
2. Focus on the concept rather than just the minute details
3. Develop clarity and comprehension of the material
4. Make the learning experience very vivid!
5. Involve multiple senses in the learning experience
6. Draw attention to patterns
7. Review material frequently

### **Pacing of Rehearsal and Variety**

1. May vary over the long term (beginning learning music to final polishing)
2. Pro-intensity but anti-tension
3. Work very hard at being positive
4. Spread drilling of a specific passage over several rehearsals rather than creating boredom
5. Don't always conduct -- sometimes monitor -- make them responsible for time and entrances
6. "Salt and Pepper Day" -- "Do not sit next to anyone playing the same instrument as you play."
7. Involve the other students while working with a specific section
  - a. Direct the others to listen for a specific element in the section that is rehearsing
  - b. Have the others clap, count, or "sizzle" pulse or subdivisions
  - c. Have the others finger their own passage silently on their instruments
8. Get off the podium at times and "mingle" (proximity effect)
9. Be prepared to vary according to your mood and their mood
10. Keep them playing -- limit talk to 10 seconds at a time
11. Focus energy, intensity, and excitement -- communicate to ensemble
12. Balance between developing skills/musicianship and developing positive/inquisitive attitude
13. Balance between the level of challenge vs. the amount of repetition or drill necessary to achieve

### **Phrasing and Musicality**

1. Proper breathing and phrasing
2. Natural tendency of dynamics and relative nature of dynamic markings
3. Proper timing of crescendos and diminuendos for best effect
4. Tapering of phrase endings instead of chopping abruptly
5. Dominance of moving lines over supporting material (melody vs. accompaniment)
6. Slight stretching of key tones in a phrase and leading tone/accidentals tendencies
7. The use of rubato
8. Directional tendencies/needs of rhythm and tonal patterns

## **Programming for Excellence**

1. Education vs. Entertainment
2. Ability vs. Challenge (in the "flow")
3. Breadth vs. Depth

## **Repertoire**

*Three Ayres from Gloucester* – Hugh Stuart  
*Rhosymedre* – Ralph Vaughan Williams  
"Blessed Are They" from the Brahms *Requiem* – arr. Buehlman  
*"Old Home Days" Suite* – Charles Ives  
*Symphony No. 1* – Daniel Bukvich  
*Prelude, Siciliano, and Rondo* – Malcolm Arnold  
*A Festival Prelude* – Alfred Reed  
*Serenade, op. 22c* – Derek Bourgeois

AND Music by Percy Grainger, Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Vincent Persichetti, Warren Benson, Norman Dello Joio, Darius Milhaud, William Schuman, Clare Grundman, Frank Erickson, Charles Carter, Frank Ticheli, etc.

## **Supplemental Material**

1. Tuning Partner Intonation CD – [www.musicpartner.com](http://www.musicpartner.com); Smart Music; etc.
2. ½-inch PVC valve for breathing exercises – Home Depot/Lowes; etc.
3. GIA Publications; Meredith Music Publications; Schirmer Books; etc.
4. Percussive Arts Society; International Association of Jazz Educators; etc.