A Challenge! The Middle School Orchestra: Building a Strong Program

Presentation for the Midwest Clinic

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<u>Introduction:</u> Personal Background

- **Bachelors/Masters Degree from Wichita State University**
- **Violinist with the Wichita Symphony**
- **Coach for Youth Orchestra sponsored by Wichita Symphony**
- **Has taught instrumental music for 34 years in the Wichita Public Schools**
- **Taught all levels**
- **String Teaching Specialist for 10 years**
    - **Conducts, plans In-Services**
    - **Organizes elementary, middle school and high school festivals**
    - **Organizes All-City Orchestra Concert**
    - **Observes, supports orchestra teachers**
    - **Makes recommendations for hiring, placement of string teachers**
    - **Writes string specifications for purchasing instruments**

<u>Wichita Public Schools Data:</u>

- **Largest school district in Kansas**
- **14 comprehensive high schools, 17 middle schools and 59 elementary schools**
- **48, 770 students, 65% on free/reduced lunches**
- **The school district 5th grade enrollment is 3, 203; 1136 fifth graders play a string instrument**
- **662 minority 5th grade string students;1,058 students use school instruments**
- **3,203 middle school students; 906 play string instruments; 453 middle school students use district instruments; 459 minority students**

- **12, 766 high school students; 419 play string instruments; 131 high school students use district instruments; 178 minority students**
- **In-house instrument repair technicians**

Robinson Middle School Data:

- **Comprised of 6, 7th and 8th grades**
- **Enrollment of 741 students**
- **There are 258 students in the Pre-International Baccalaureate Program**
- **146 orchestra students in the three orchestras**
- **Instrumental students meet 5 days a week for 40 minutes.**
- **The student body is comprised of 50.2% White, 19.4% Black, 11.8% Asian, 8.5% Hispanic, 8.5% Multi-Race, 1.48% Native American students.**
- **There are 63.56% Regular Education Students and 36.44% Special Education Students at Robinson.**
- **52% of the students are on free/reduced price lunches.**

I. Plan/Prepare

Recruiting:

- **Recruiting is done at the end of the 4th grade level, and at the beginning of fifth grade**
- **Show recruiting video or do live demonstrations**
- **Teacher sells themselves/program**
- **At the middle school and high school level, befriend the counselor, feeder teachers**
- **Contact prospective students**
- **Draft a "welcome letter" for incoming students**

Class Lists:

- **Compile all information; parent names, phone numbers, record instruments students will play for the year**
- **Have instrumentation list for each class**
- **Inventory school instruments**

Handbook:

- **Include introduction, requirements/expectations**
- **grading, performance dates, supply list, practice sheets, private teacher form**

- **concert attire**
- **Include parent signature return form for "first grade"**

Classroom:

- **Set-up chairs ,stands, make permanent seating chart**
- **Plan instrument storage**
- **Organize areas to pick up and return items**
- **Put up posters/standards, bulletin boards**

Music Selection:

- **Review standards for each grade level**
- **Listen to recordings, go through music at stores**
- **Attend workshops at the state, national levels**
- **Check ASTA list, state lists, Teaching Music Through Orchestra Performance Book I and II, talk to colleagues**

Classroom Procedures:

- **Plan your procedures, practice them with students during first weeks of school**
- **Practice routines for every aspect of your classroom**
- **The First Day of School by Harry Wong is a great resource**

III Skill Development:

- **Daily, consistent, sequential**
- **Tuning, playing posture and "set-up", rhythm work, tone development**
- **Pitch, left-hand facility, right-hand facility, bowing development**
- **Remind, remediate, insist and expect!**

IV Review and "Regroup":

- **Review previous years' material**
- **Quickly evaluate each group, prioritize their needs**
- **There are no shortcuts in Music! Players must put in the time in order to improve!**
- **Concentrate first on posture and positions**
- **Immediately work on teaching them to tune themselves in 6th grade**

- **Use an organized counting system, stress subdivision**
- **Take tuning grades**
- **Scales, unison work, modeling, call and response are necessary tools as you work with the orchestras**
- **Take multiple playing grades from previous book (this is review during the first month of school**
- **Use a sequential method book to build technique for all**
- **Chorales are valuable for pitch, balance, blend**
- **Scale book and position book for 7th & 8th graders**
- **Practice "sight-reading so they are prepared for adjudication in the spring**

V Performances:

- **Quality must be the standard**
- **Have inspiring, varied, quality literature**
- **Rotate seating, combine groups**
- **Have outside clinicians work with your group before festival**
- **Have sectionals**
- **Record groups, let them listen and evaluate their rehearsals**
- **Always "Raise the Bar"**
- **Encourage performing in district, honor groups, festivals, youth symphonies, all city groups**

VI Teacher –Musician:

- **Continue to learn, work on your weaknesses**
- **Learn to play "well" all the instruments you teach**
- **Continue to perform or be an audience participant**
- **Collaborate with colleagues, share ideas**
- **Continue to attend clinics-like the Midwest, state and national conferences, ASTA conferences and summer workshops**
- **Demonstrate on different instruments for the students**
- **Share your musical experiences with younger, less experienced teachers**

- **Ask about the students' activities, connect with them, show that you care about them**

Above all, share your LOVE OF MUSIC and your enthusiasm for what you do! What a "GIFT" we are given, to be able to enjoy what we have chosen to do for LIFE!

String Orchestra Literature
(Some of My Favorites)

Raspberry Ramble	E. Siennicki	I	Lake State
Camp town Races	S. Foster	I	Hill
Skater's Waltz	R. Meyer	I	Highland Etling
Canyon Sunset	J. Caponegro	I	Kendor
The Christmas Canon	M. Greene	I+	Alfred
Snowflakes	L. Taylor	I	FJH
Crystal View Waltz	L. Niehaus	I	Highland Etling
The Elves' Toy Shop	E. Siennicki	I+	Highland Etling
Bach Country Fiddles	R. Meyer	I	Highland Etling
The Russian Music Box	Soon H. Newbold	I	FJH
Burgundian Carol	Deborah Monday	I+	Kendor
Polovetzian Dance	Arr. R. Frost	I+	Kendor
Celtica	Brian Balmages	I	FJH
Strawberry Canyon Polka	R. Frost	II	Young World
Loch Lomond	N. Klauss	II	Kendor
Forest Gump Main Theme	A.Silvestri	II	Hal Leonard
Blue Ridge Boogie	B. Chase	II	Hal Leonard
Kumbaya	R. Meyer	II	Highland Etling
Two Horse Open Sleigh	G. Fletcher	II	Norman Lee
Danny Boy	H. Alshin	II+	Highland Etling
Brandenburg 5 (Mov. I)	Bach/Isaac	II+	Highland Etling
Meditation	E. Humperdinck	II	TRN
Ragtime	C. Bryant	II	Kjos
Fox in the Chicken House	E.Siennicki	II	Highland Etling
The Coventry Carol	J. Lloyd	II+	Kjos
Listen to the Stars	C. Naylor	II	Highland Etling
Dona Nobis Pacem	O.Goldsmith	II	Belwin
Backpack in Strings	R. Frost	II	Kjos
Phantom Dance	C. Elledge	II	Kjos
Celtic Fiddles	K. Fishburn	II+	Wingert Jones
Disco Strings	J. Caponegro	II	Kendor
Salute to Freedom	J. McLeod	II	Kjos
String town Road Rag	D. Gazda	II+	Highland Etling
A Modal Festival	G. Marsh	II	Highland Etling
Shenandoah	J. Bullock	II+	Warner Brothers
Broadway Joe	G. Cuhna	II	Wynn
Montecito	L. Niehaus	II	TRN
Hornpipe	R. Frost	II	Southern
Blue Mt. Barn Dance	F.Haferty	II	Kendor
Bow Town Blues	M. Williams	II	Highland Etling
Concerto in D Major	M. Dowty	II	Wynn
Bonita Dai E.	Siennicki	II	Highland Etling
Stars & Stripes Forever	Sousa/Story	II+	Belwin
Teleman Sinfonia	Teleman/Brown	II	Carl Fischer
Entrance Queen of Sheba	Handel/Fisher	II+	Highland Etling
A Capital Ship	C. Gruselle	II	FJH
Jericho	D. Schaffer	II+	FJH

Let There Be Peace On Earth	R. Sieving	II+	Highland Etling
Still, Still, Still	P. Hall	II	Good Works
A Quiet Rain	W. Cummings	II	Grand Mesa
Ashokan Farewell	Custer	II	Alfred
Celtic Trilogy	Elliot Del Borgo	II	C. Alan
La Tempesta Di Mare	A. Vivaldi	II	C. Alan
Dramatic Essay	M. Williams	II	Alfred
A Kwanza Celebration	J. O'Reilly	II	Highland Etling
La Rejouissance	Handel/Meyer	II	Highland Etling
Ave Verum	Mozart/Del Borgo	II	Kendor
Tanzun	J. Galliard	II+	TRN
A Quiet Music	D. Wagner	III	Warner Brothers
Declarations	J. Bishop	III	Kendor
The Journey	W. Hofeldt	III	Kjos
Sahara Crossing	R. Meyer	III	Alfred
Deerpath Tryptic	W. Hofeldt	III	Kjos
On a Hymn Song of Phillip Bliss	Holsinger	III	TRN
Sanseneon	R. Frost	III	Kjos
Legend	D. O'Fallon	III	Highland Etling
Lullaby	W. Hofeldt	III	Kjos
It's About A Horse	R. Dekker	III	Wingert Jones
Irish Fantasy	M. Overholt	III	Kjos
Scottish Fantasy	M. Overholt	III	Kjos
Blackberry Blossom	G. Gackstatter	III	C. Alan
A Pirate's Legend	S. H. Newbold	III	FJH
Adieu	Todd Coleman	III+	Bourne
Mantras	Richard Meyer	III	Highland Etling
Cello's Ole	Richard Meyer	III	Highland Etling
The Gift	William Hofeldt	III	Opus One
Adagio and Allegro	Handel/Del Borgo	III	Kendor
Sinfonia in D	Johann Heinchen	III	Carl Fischer
Spring	Vivaldi/R. Meyer	III	Alfred
Serenade for Strings	Leyden	IV	Plymouth
Black Sea	Gary Gackstatter	IV	C. Alan
Introduction and Allegro	Robert McCashim	IV	FJH
Celebration	Richard Meyer	IV	Highland Etling
Pagodas	Richard Meyer	IV	Highland Etling
Fiddler's Stew	Richard Meyer	IV	Alfred
The Faraway Place	William Hofeldt	IV	Kjos