

SELECT BAND - Ideas for use

These ideas for use include:

- What is included?
- What is “Select Band”?
- Before kickoff day
- Kickoff day & the first week
- Keeping momentum going
- Differentiation
- Adjustments to what your select band rewards will be

What is included?

- Requirement Check-off Sheets
- Invitations to Select Band
- Bulletin Board Momentum Posters
- “I’ve Started!” cards (print on white paper)
- “Halfway There!” cards (print on colored paper if possible)

What is “Select Band?”

In my program, Select Band is an honor that beginning band students can earn between Jan-early March. They pass off every line on the requirement sheet and are officially invited to perform as a Select Band for one song on the spring concert. (I start beginners in 6th grade and see them daily for long, like-instrument classes.)

For you, it might be a project for your 3rd year players to work on in the fall; then in the spring they get to perform a special concert. It might be a project for a second band at a high school to work on if they are not ready for the all-region music but still need a challenge. Perhaps instead of an additional song at the concert, they are allowed to play a more challenging solo (or an ensemble) at a spring contest.

It really can be tailored to the needs of your program. As you read through the following program description, keep in mind that you can adapt any part of it to what works for you and your students. The only thing you can’t adapt easy is the difficulty level. (You can differentiate some – see ideas at the end.) So be sure you are launching this program with a group of students for whom the difficulty level is a good fit!

Before Kick-Off Day:

Build up momentum before handing out the Select Band Requirements check off sheets. Talk to the kids about how you're going to be introducing them to a special opportunity on Monday. Tell them you're getting everything ready, and you're really excited to tell them about it!

Ideally, you would prepare them to be successful on at least some the required scales/technique exercises before handing out the sheets. For example, the clarinets might have been working on 1 of the scales, and two of the clarke studies for a few weeks before handing it out. This allows you to have a strong start and sets up the students for success right off the bat.

Prepare a bulletin board in the band hall the week before the kick-off. I suggest using the posters included in this resource to make the bulletin board that says say "SELECT BAND" and "Earn your name here!" Or "Meet our Members" or "Coming Soon" etc. (Samples to use are include in your TPT download.) Also put up some 'place holder signs' like "Who will be first?" "Who will be next?" and "Start today!" As students start to earn their names and photos on the board, you can take these place holder signs off.

You can also post guidelines on this bulletin board such as "Lines may be passes off before or after school for a director. You get 2 tries on a line and then must wait until the next day to try again. Private lesson teachers may also pass off lines." You can make these guidelines fit the needs of your program.

Decide ahead of time how you will handle the logistics of individual pass offs. They take LOTS OF TIME on the directors' part. Some ideas (if you are concerned about time) are to allow lesson teachers to pass off, allow older high school students to pass off, allow student leaders who have passed off the Ab scale to pass off other students' Ab scales, or let students submit recordings (if you really have time to listen to them within a 12-24 hour time frame). The BEST option is for a director to pass off everything live, but that is often not physically possible. This program will be more successful with more momentum/students succeeding in pass offs, so be sure they don't give up because the wait time to play for the director is always so long. It's better to allow others (lesson teachers, students) to help than to hit a wall because you can't listen to 1000 individual pass offs.

Another option is to let students play lines in class. However, you must be VERY careful about this option as it can eat up a lot of teaching time. If you allow students to play in class, many will never come in outside of class. You must decide what is best for your program. You could allow students to have one "pass off day" per week they only get 1 (or 2) attempts on one item. The problem is, if kids aren't coming in on their own outside of class, the momentum will not be there. The idea of this program is that it is optional and is an honor and privilege and you want students to come in and play on their own. However, depending on your program, your teaching time and your bandwidth as a teacher, you should set it up in a way that will work for you. You can always tweak it from year to year.

Finally, **be sure that the difficulty is correct for the group you plan to use it with.** It needs to be a stretch, but manageable. Ideally, students would be able to play off one line every day if they are practicing. They will need to have been taught the tools needed to work ahead on the lines or will need help begin taught in class as the program is going on. The more they are pre-taught, the better. If you look at the scales and your woodwinds never learn the scales on the page within beginning band, this is not a good fit for your beginners. However, if your beginners normally learn everything on the requirement page by the end of the year, and you're willing to push a bit more, you could probably give the Select Band students the goal of March. This is the reason we set the goal as March – our leaders (and lesson teachers) will push to work ahead and finish.

Kick-Off Day & The First Week:

Hand out the “Select Band Requirements” sheets. (Copy double-sided on brightly colored paper if possible.) Have students put their name at the top of the paper. Tell them this is going to be a special paper for them, and they want to keep it somewhere safe and bring it every day. (In my program, if they lose it, they must replay all of it. Usually that's not too hard because once they've passed it off, they should be able to perform it on demand. This seriously cuts down on lost papers.)

Have this be a really fun/exciting day! Let the students know what they will get for participating.

Tell the kids that when they pass off their first line, they get a ‘starter’ card on the board. This can be as simple as the student's name written on a piece of paper, or you may use the “I've started” cards enclosed in the resource. Allow them to play off lines in ANY order. Different exercises are more difficult for different instruments/students.

When they pass off half of the items, they get a “Half-Way There” with their name on it on the board. Print these cards on colored paper, if possible, to make them stand out on the board. If you can't print on colored paper, you can let the students decorate their card with markers to make it feel more special than the “I've started” card.

You can add other external motivation, but with this program I prefer to stick with “the honor” only. It really is to motivate kids purely with the satisfaction of passing off lines and earning the privilege to be in the Select Band.

On Kick-off Day, be sure they know what the final goal and reward is. When they finish all items, make a BIG deal! Personally, I do the following:

- Explain what Select Band will be for your program (see the next paragraph)
- Award them a really nice (card stock, color printing if possible) invitation to participate in the Select Band in front of their class. (Sample invitations are included in your download) Have the class applaud.
- Take a picture of them with their instrument and invitation in front of a band logo sign or nice background.

- Email the picture to their parents and copy their lesson teacher (if applicable) and the other band directors. I mention how this was an optional challenge and very difficult and their child chose to accept the challenge and be a leader and how we are so proud of them. (The other director then replies with another congratulations.)
- You can consider asking an administrator to award the invitation to the first few kids if possible. This can get complicated due to needing the availability of the admin during class time.
- You could consider announcing members of the select band on social media, school announcements, band newsletters, concerts etc.

Also on Kick-off Day, let them know what 'select band' is. For me, it a band that meets before school, one day a week to learn a 'fun/popular' song. Students have until spring break to earn their place in the band. Rehearsals are after spring break to the concert, so only about 6 rehearsals.

Continuing Momentum:

This is where having students prepared to pass off before you start the program is really helpful. It's tough to build momentum if the kids don't have the skills to pass off. Be sure you use these requirement sheets with the students who are prepared for them. It should be a slight stretch – a challenge – but not so hard that only 2 or 3 kids can complete it. My goal is for 30-50% of students to complete the sheet on time (since it's optional). And for any student who chooses to really work hard on it consistently to be able to be successful.

Try to get as many kids as possible to pass off something as FAST as possible (by the next class is best) and when they do, make a BIG deal about it in the next class. Point out their name on the board with the "I've started" card, ask them in class how they did it, when they did it etc. "I came in before school and played it and you signed it off." Make it sound simple to the rest of the kids. Build momentum early! Catch kids before and after class and ask when they might come in to play off their first line.

Have a check-in daily where you ask kids "Raise your hand if you have a line you are ready to play. Raise your hand if you are going to come in today to play."

During this daily check in, call up each student who has newly gotten their name on the board and let them add their card to the board. If Suzie passed off her first line, call her up, have her write her name on the card and staple it to the board

(or do that for her or have it done already and have her get up and go check it out.) This calls more attention to each success than just saying their name.

As quickly as possible, try to get student leaders to the halfway point so they get a color “Halfway There” card. Same idea – have them come to the front, get their card and put it on the board. Continue the daily check ins. My students have about 6 weeks to finish, but anything between 4-9 weeks might work well.

Differentiation

Ways to make the requirements simpler or more challenging include:

- Adjustment of tempo requirements (ex. anything from quarter = 60-140)
- Adjustment of the number of chances they get on each line each day
- Adjustment of what you consider ‘mastery level’ from 90%-100%. I recommend you don’t go below 90%.
- Adjustment of musical requirements (ex.- I require students to play Go Tell Aunt Rhody with 2 different styles. The first half – light, bouncy, happy, the second half – slow, melancholy, then the DC is light, bouncy, happy again.)
- Want to offer an extra challenge for early finishers? Have them play the whole 1st page at a faster tempo all in 1 sitting with no mistakes!

Adjustments for What Your “Select Band” Rewards Will Be:

If you can’t find any way to have a special group meet physically for a concert to form an official “Select Band,” here are some other options:

Consider allowing them to perform a special solo instead. This could be just for their class or could be an evening “Select Band Solo Recital” for parents.

Recognize students at a concert. Explain to the audience what hard work it took, have them receive a certificate. (See resource for editable certificate option.)

If the program/boosters are able, award these students a special scholarship for a university band camp or for private lessons.

If all else fails, award them a prize like a candy bar, after school movie day or ice cream party. The REAL prize will be the recognition – the signatures on their requirement page, the invitation, the certificate. But they will also appreciate a physical award if you are unable to provide an additional musical experience.

If you want to have an event at the end and include students who didn't quite finish everything, consider this twist on the ice cream bar (or taco bar etc). Every item they play off earns them more from the selections.

- 1st item – earn a bowl (optional – you can skip)
- 2nd item – earn a spoon (optional – you can skip)
- 3rd item – earn a scoop of ice cream (variety of flavors if possible)
- 4th item – earn a topping (hot fudge, skittles, nerds, caramel etc)
- 5th item – earn a topping
- 6th item – earn another scoop
- Continue in the same manner

Alternately, host a movie night for all students who finish at least 5 items. If they finish 7 they get popcorn during the movie. If they finish all of them they get a box of movie candy.

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