

“Teaching Heterogeneous Classes in the Small School: Do What Works For You!”

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Teaching heterogeneously (all instruments at once) all by yourself, what do you do? Do what works for you.

Much of my career has been teaching at a one director school. Teaching in small schools is rewarding, and has its positives, but it also has its challenges.

When I first took a job where I was by myself, when getting started I would ask myself, “is it bad or wrong to do this or that?” I called mentors and asked them the same questions. Their response was always, “no that’s not bad, there’s no wrong way, do what works for you.”

The goal is to do what works for us. Today, I’ll share with you what has worked well for me.

Pre-Band Class (Year Before Beginning Band)

- Steady Beat – clap, pat, march to music
- Down the row each kid counting (1-2-3-4) in different tempos and time signatures
- Learn about the band instruments - their families, their sounds
- Music Alphabet – forward and backwards – handouts
- Music Theory/symbols – learn, recognize, define, draw – staff, clef signs, bar lines, time signatures – draw on white board, handouts (theory books)
- Note Naming – draw on white board, handouts (theory books)
- Rhythm Duration and Counting – learn, recognize, define, and draw – diagram the rhythms (beat numbers on top and down up foot tapping arrows on the bottom for pulse and subdividing) – count out loud
- Recorders – basic 5 notes

- Testing on Mouthpieces/Instruments – last six weeks – determine what instrument to play in beginner band

Beginning Band – 1st Six Weeks

- Week 1 – Rules, procedures, expectations, goals
Steady Beat, Down the row counting (1-2-3-4)
Music Alphabet
- Week 2 – Learn/review music fundamentals/symbols
Learn/review note names
- Week 3 – Learn/review rhythm duration/counting, diagram rhythms
- Week 4 – Review all learned
Instrument Check-out
Instrument Assembly
- Week 5 – Instrument Assembly (monitor)
Breathing Exercises
First sounds on mouthpieces, mouthpiece practice
First sounds on instruments

Beginning Band – Instrument Assembly

- One instrument at a time (how keep the others focused while waiting for their turn?)
Theory Worksheets/Review
Diagram of Instrument/parts (out of Ed Sueta book – study)
Read/study first pages of Essential Elements 2000 book (The Basics)

Beginning Band – Set Up

- Rows and columns – spaced out – walk in between sections – observe, monitor, notice what students are doing (good and bad habits).

Beginning Band – Daily/Weekly Routine

- Tone Builder 52,86 (Essential Elements 2000) – whole notes different durations
- Long Tone Exercises
- B-flat 5 note scale – different patterns – whole, half, quarter, eighth
- Rhythms – flash cards or book
- Lines out of book
- Sheet Music – count, sing, clap before playing certain sections/measures
- Rhythm Flash Cards

Beginning Band – Teaching Strategies/Tricks/Fundamentals/Focus Points

I try to vary the activities / play the exercises in different ways and patterns to check for understanding, make them think, and keep them focused.

- lengthen the notes on tone builders (whole note, double whole note, triple, etc.)
- Soloists on tone builders
- Lines out of book – repeat measures, start at different places, each section play their assigned measure
- Quick checks of individuals and sections

Check tone of a section – long tones

Check a section/individual on a new note or new rhythm just learned

Check their progress on a lip slur just learned

Check their hand position/fingering when learn a technical passage

Teach a short new concept

2nd/3rd Year Band (1st few weeks)

- Week 1 – Rules, procedures, expectations, goals
Review theory (handouts)
Review counting
Instrument Check-out / folders / slots
- Week 2 – Get back in the swing of things – review lines out of book
- Week 3 – Start the daily/weekly routine

2nd/3rd Year Band – Daily/Weekly Routine

- Same as beginners (higher level)

2nd/3rd Year Band – Teaching Strategies/Tricks/Fundamentals/Focus Points

- Same as beginners (higher level)