

Teaching Middle School Band in a Large Heterogeneous Setting

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Erin Cole

- * The band room should always be set up, neat, and in order before the students walk in
- * Be very clear and CONSISTENT about how to enter the room and your rules of the class room.
- * Be very specific about how and when to unpack
- * Always be prepared and have a plan
- * Instill correct rehearsal procedure with a consistent approach each day (see the attached handout on "Setting up Correct Rehearsal Procedure")
- * Utilize staff as much as possible
- * Split up woodwind, brass, percussion as often as possible
- * Classroom management is SO important
- * Pacing the rehearsal correctly is also very important
- * Early morning and after school band
- * Encourage Private Lessons
- * Rehearsals should be disciplined, but students can still have fun! - MOTIVATE!

Setting Up Correct Rehearsal Procedure for a Large Heterogeneous Class Setting

I. How to Enter the Classroom

- A.** Students should enter the room quietly.
- B.** Director should put the rehearsal plan on the board.
 - 1.** It is also a good idea with beginners to put a few reminders, such as, “Enter the Room Quietly!” or “Do Not Unpack Yet”. Until the routine is set, written reminders will help the students.
- C.** Director should be in the band room supervising students. This could be at the front of the room, at the door to the classroom, or anywhere in the room that supervision is needed.
- D.** Give the students very clear instructions on getting their instruments and having a seat.

II. When and How to Unpack

- A.** Students will need detailed information on when to unpack the instrument. I have students unpack school-owned (large instruments) immediately upon entering the classroom. Everyone else gets their instruments out of the locker or storage room and has a seat, but they do not unpack yet.
- B.** The rest of the students do not unpack until after the announcements.

*(the unpacking routine is developed for large bands, small groups could modify the approach as long as the routine is set and students are quiet.
- C.** After the announcements are given, students are given very clear instructions that they are to unpack without talking and get the band book and music in order. They are not to make a single sound on the instrument or mouthpiece at all during this time.

D. Students are then instructed to tizzle (air play) along with the cd recording once their instruments are unpacked. The cd is the background cd for the band book. I play the lines that we will be rehearsing in class that day. Tizzling with the cd is meant for the students to have something to keep them occupied while everyone is unpacking. It is also a tool to get the students focused for the day's rehearsal. It should NOT be used as a substitute for teaching the songs in the book or a replacement for warming up.

E. Once I see the students are all unpacked, I stop the cd and step on the podium.

III. *What to do When the Director Gets on the Podium*

A. Students are to immediately stop what they are doing and get quiet as soon as the director gets on the podium.

1. If the instruments are unpacked, the students are to go to ready position. (see below - section IV for ready position)

2. Make sure that the music stands are at a height so the students can see the music and the director at the same time and the height of the stand allows for perfect posture.

B. All students' eyes must be on the director on the podium.

1. The director should be able to address the class in a normal speaking voice. The classroom should be completely silent, so that the director does not have to raise his/her voice at all.

2. The director should inform the students of the plan for the rehearsal that day.

IV. *Positions - Rest, Ready, Play positions*

A. Rest Position - Students are sitting with instrument on lap (uniform way for each section). Students are sitting with their back against the back of the chair.

B. Ready Position - Students move to the front 3 inches of the chair, sitting up with perfect posture. Straight backs, feet flat on the floor, and instruments straight up and down on their right knee or a position close to that depending on the instrument. Each section of the band has a uniform ready position. Tubas and euphoniums go to a position that is the same as their playing position. Students go to this position every time the director steps on the podium or students are instructed to go to this position during the rehearsal.

C. Play Position - Students bring the instrument up to correct playing position for that particular position. Posture does not change from ready to play position. Students know when to go to this position when the director brings his/her hands up to conduct.

V. *How to incorporate positions throughout the rehearsal*

A. Rest, Ready, and Play positions should be used throughout the rehearsal. For example: Once the band is finished playing, the director brings his/her hands down. Students are to immediately go to ready position and not speak or make any sounds on the instrument. The director should choose the positions to be used, provide detailed instructions, and continuously reinforce this practice. Detailed instructions and a firm commitment to the procedure will result in better rehearsals.

B. Let the positions do all the work for you! If the routine is established with rest, ready, and playing position, the students will get accustomed to that routine and you will find you will not be dealing with talking and behavior issues. You will have the students more actively engaged in the rehearsal, and you will do more teaching.

VI. *Correct Student Rehearsal Procedure*

A. Throughout the rehearsal, make sure the students maintain correct technique by incorporating the positions.

B. Do not allow the students to talk during the rehearsal. Remind them that there is no talking in rest, ready, or play position.

C. Students should only play on the instrument when instructed by the director. Playing out of turn on the instrument is not acceptable.

D. Eyes on the director when he/she is speaking.

E. Praise the students often for exhibiting correct rehearsal procedure and proper behavior. Positive reinforcement motivates the students!

VII. *Director's pacing of the rehearsal*

A. The director's pacing of the rehearsal is very important to the student's motivation. It is the director's responsibility to pace the rehearsal appropriately so that the objectives are met educationally, and at the same time the students are actively involved.

B. When rehearsing sections, be careful not to neglect other students for long periods of time (ex. percussion). This only encourages misbehavior.

VIII. *"Tizzling" (air playing)*

A. Tizzling can be beneficial to the students as well as the director. Tizzling allows the students to actively do the fingers and put air through the instrument in rhythm. This will allow the students to go through the musical passage without playing out loud and it will allow for the director to hear what the students are tizzling and make any corrections before the students play out loud.

B. Tizzling is VERY beneficial when the students are coming in the room and getting ready for the class to start. The students are to tizzle along with the cd each day when they come in the room. I have the cd recording of the piece playing that the students will be rehearsing that day in class. As soon as the students unpack, they are to immediately tizzle with the cd that is playing. This gets the students mentally focused before class even starts.

IX. *Model for the students*

A. Modeling great tone quality on the instruments is very helpful for the students. Play for the classes as often as possible.

B. The student's tone will mature at a much faster pace when they hear and emulate characteristic tone quality.

X. *Take Volunteers!*

A. When the students are playing lines in the book, warm-ups, or scales, TAKE VOLUNTEERS! Students love to show off and play in front of the class.

B. Taking volunteers promotes self confidence.

C. It Provides an opportunity to hear students individually and give them feedback

D. It keeps the students motivated.

XI. *Packing up and ending rehearsal*

A. Always give the students feedback on how the rehearsal went that day. Offer positive feedback or even suggestions to make the rehearsal better the next day.

B. Give the students practice homework for the next day's rehearsal.

C. Tell the students the plan for the next day's rehearsal.

XII. *Benefits of starting your beginners off right with correct rehearsal technique*

A. Starting your beginners off with this routine in the first year of playing will allow you to have very successful 7th and 8th grade rehearsals. The students will already be in a rehearsal routine to which they are accustomed. This will allow you to have very disciplined classes that will be able to rehearse very well.

B. It is very easy to transition from a disciplined approach with the rehearsal procedure to the Daily Routine for Band we use every day as our warm up. The Tapp M.S. Band has been using the Daily Routine for Band to establish the necessary foundations that have become inherent in our program. I am able to spend quite a bit of time on a beneficial warm-up. At Tapp M.S. we have established a very routine approach to the warm-up each day which consists of breathing exercises, buzzing exercises, scales, lip slurs, and chorales. The warm-up is an opportunity for learning through review or introduction of fundamental concepts. Because the classes are so disciplined, we are able to spend half of the class period on the fundamental warm-up routine and the students are able to focus on that task.

***Tapp M.S. Warm-up - "Daily Routine for Band" - for more info go to:
www.dailyroutineforband.com***

XIII. *Keys to Success*

- A.** Clear Instructions
- B.** Reminders about correct rehearsal procedure
- C.** Balance between routine and variety
- D.** High expectations
- E.** Commitment from the director and students to establish and maintain consistent proper rehearsal technique

Contact info: erin.cole@cobbk12.org

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