

Game On!

Winning the Game of Covid-era Band Through Virtual Victories

Katie Lewis and Laura Bell

You have made it through the first couple weeks of virtual teaching. If you find yourself struggling to keep up with the demands of this new learning environment, you're not alone! The name of the game is staying positive, keeping students engaged, and ensuring they're having fun. Success is inevitable if you follow our Rules of Play for teaching Band in the Covid-era!

Object of the Game

1. Teach kids to love music.
2. Be encouraging and FUN!
3. Build relationships that last with students.
4. Retain students so they can continue through all seven Levels of Band!

Contents of the Game

1. Supportive and organized teacher
2. Eager and excited students
3. Learning Management System with integrated platforms
4. Computer with webcam and a good microphone
5. Video conferencing application
6. Positive attitude...and lots of grace for yourself when things don't go as planned!

Game Setup

1. Effective Communication

This is one of the most important tools to winning the game! Ensure your

band families understand the rules of the game, how to be successful, and ultimately feel comfortable with procedures and expectations. Examples include: Smore newsletters, Remind texting, social media posts

2. Formulate Your Strategy

Prepare your virtual lessons so they are as fun and engaging for your students as possible. This takes a lot of prior planning and time—they deserve it!

3. Physical Setup of your Teaching Space (Virtual and Face to Face)

Work within your district's protocols to create appropriate spaces for teaching. You will need spaces for virtual teaching as well as face to face.

4. Creating an Online Presence

Families and your community will be looking for an online presence, now more than ever! Be sure to have at least one social media platform where you can push out quick information, brag on your students/program, and celebrate victories through this time!

5. Setting up Your Zoom

Ensure that your settings are adjusted to utilize all the features Zoom has to offer. Include your Zoom links and information in all communications for ease of connecting. Include in newsletters, on your LMS and through Remind texting. Be mindful not to publish anywhere outside of your program.



Gameplay Strategies

• Canvas

Having a solid learning management system is important to keep yourself and your students organized. Canvas is an incredible tool that works beautifully with many of the applications we discuss below. Personalize it with your own Bitmoji classroom or any number of ways to make it reflect your personality for your students!

• WeVideos

Bring your "A" Game to your flipped classroom with WeVideo! You can take any video you record and add text, effects, background music or any graphic you want to upload! The applications are endless and it is incredibly user friendly!

• Flipgrid

Score points with your students by letting them do what they do best...take selfie videos! Give your students a prompt and have them record a short video response. Go a

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step further and give them the opportunity to like and comment on peer videos! You can use this as an assessment tool, or as a way to offer peer to peer feedback.

- **Edpuzzle**

Take your game to the next level by incorporating this application into your lessons! Edpuzzle allows you to take any video and create a lesson out of it, allowing you to truly test your students' comprehension by checking for understanding throughout the video.

- **Bandable Tech**

Level up your music theory concepts with Bandable Tech. This is a Google Slides file that is customizable for every instrument! The bundle includes such concepts as note names, the staff, rhythms, note values, time signature, musical alphabet and more! Every topic you could want is available and can be integrated right into Canvas or Google Classroom! Available on Teachers Pay Teachers: [tinyurl.com/bandabletech](https://www.tinyurl.com/bandabletech).

- **Kami**

Use this app to make any document interactive! Gone are the days of using paper worksheets. Take all those old files and let students complete them online with Kami! We also love using this tool to give performance feedback to our students, marking important notes directly on the pdf sheet music on the screen!

- **Kahoot**

This is a game-based learning platform that allows you to create your own multiple choice games to play with students! Not feeling creative? There's a ton of great Kahoots about music theory, note reading and more already available for you. Score!

- **Quizizz**

In the world of gaming, everyone loves unlocking achievements. This quiz-based app is fabulous for testing your students' knowledge while providing a video game feel. Students can earn different power ups when they answer questions correctly and see their progress on a leaderboard, all while you're assessing their comprehension!

- **Jamboard**

Progress your skills with this virtual whiteboard from Google Suite. If you have tried to use a real whiteboard while virtually teaching, you know it's a struggle for students to see. Jamboard can be used while screen sharing in your Zoom. It is easy to use and is especially user-friendly if you have a touchscreen tablet with a stylus! You can choose to make your Jamboard interactive for your students or lock it so only you can write.

- **Upbeat Music App**

Why leave Synchronous playing to chance? Practice and record in real time WITH your peers! Students can record with groups of up to four players and hear the results of the collaboration immediately! You can assign them to record an ensemble together to ensure they get their best recording for you. PLUS there is the added bonus of students talking and joining forces online! Check it out here: upbeatmusicapp.com.

Scoring - Reflection and Assessment

1. Re-evaluate your plan and strategy regularly.

If you have taught for any length of time, you may feel that your scope and sequence and the pacing of your instruction is ingrained. But whether you're teaching solely online or a mix including face to face learners, the need to constantly self-assess what we're teaching and HOW we are doing it is more important than ever. Consider doing these self-assessments weekly, or more often as needed. Our world of education has changed temporarily, and if we don't stay ahead of the game trying to find new strategies, it's our students who will lose. Talk to others in your district or surrounding areas to find out what is working for them. We are not alone in this!

2. Get feedback from your students/parents often.

Check in with your students and families regularly to find out what IS working for them and not just in Band class! Is there something a core teacher is doing that is really effective, or that students are enjoying? If so, find a way to make adaptations for Band.

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Keep an open mind if students or parents share that something you are trying is NOT working. Don't be afraid to change strategies if what you're doing is not effective.

Troubleshooting

1. Game On!

Google Folder of Resources. We have created a Google folder full of instructional videos, examples and other resources for virtual teaching. Check it out! tinyurl.com/gameontha.

2. Prevent problems by taking care of yourself and your students.

It is critical to take brain breaks and physical breaks when teaching right now. Be sure to provide these outlets not just for yourself, but for your students too! They can practice breathing techniques, or stand and sit with perfect posture.

3. Lean on your network of people.

Team up with other band directors to see what is working for them in their classrooms. Consider meeting regularly (via Zoom) with directors in your district, Region, or even with directors from across the state to share ideas and collaborate. Utilize the assortment of Facebook groups out there devoted to our cause. They range from all-encompassing groups, such as @Band Directors, or more localized groups like @Texas Band Directors, and very specific groups such as @Fine Arts (Performing Arts/Visual Arts) Teachers Who Use Canvas. This era of unprecedented technology allows collaboration to be so much easier—take advantage of it!

4. YouTube

We have an array of resources at our fingertips that we often forget about! If you are struggling with how to do something (seriously, just about *anything*), you can find someone to show you how on YouTube. This is how we learned to build our own Bitmoji classrooms, integrate apps into Canvas, and even replace a garbage disposal.

Your students certainly know how to use it, so add it to your virtual tool belt!

Winning the Game

Keep your students engaged and make Band FUN! This year is not about creating the best musicians ever. It's about keeping our students happy, fostering a love for music-making and Band, and creating the best musicians possible given our limitations. The more players we have in this game, the better!

Game Design: Katie Lewis (lewisk@friscoisd.org) and

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Producer: Texas Bandmasters Association

Development: Our mentors (Melodianne Mallow, Brian Merrill, Cindy Bulloch, Rodney Klett)

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Katie Lewis is in her eleventh year as the Director of Bands at Maus Middle School. The Maus Wind Ensemble was selected by the Foundation for Music Education as National and Commended Winners in the Mark of Excellence National Wind Band Project for several years. The Wind Ensemble was also named the 7th runner up in the CC 2018 TMEA Honor Band contest. Mrs. Lewis graduated magna cum laude and received her Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of North Texas. She has had articles published and is an active clinician and adjudicator. Mrs. Lewis is a member of TMEA, TBA, TMAA, Phi Beta Mu, Sigma Alpha Iota and Texas Flute Society. She serves as the TMEA Region 24 Secretary and Middle School Band Co-Chair. Mrs. Lewis resides in McKinney with her husband, Nathan, who is a fellow band director, and her sons Jackson (7 years) and Micah (5 years).

Mrs. Laura Bell is in her twentieth year in teaching and her fourth year as the Director of Bands at Stafford Middle School in Frisco ISD. Bands under her direction receive consistent Sweepstakes awards at UIL, superior ratings at several festivals in the DFW area, as well as numerous Best in Class distinctions. Mrs. Bell is magna cum laude graduate of the University of North Texas percussion department and an active clinician and adjudicator. She is currently serving as the Region 24 Middle School Band Division Co-Chair. Her professional affiliations include the TMEA, TMAA, TBA, and Phi Beta Mu. Mrs. Bell and her husband Michael Beavers, also a band director, reside in Frisco with their two children Emily (16, horn player) and Grayson (12, bassoon player).

Check out the authors' summer clinic presentation "Cultivating Covid Champs: Building Your Best Beginners!" Replays of this and all the 2020 Virtual Convention sessions will be available to registered attendees through December 31, 2020. Online registration will remain open as well. Let your friends know they can still register for \$100 and have access to all the replays.