

With All Those Other Electives Available, How Do I Keep My Students Enrolled in Band?

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Greatest dropouts occur:

3. After the first year, between beginning and advanced band
4. Between middle school and high school.

Students drop out of the band program for several reasons:

- 1. They are poor players, unhappy with their choice of instruments and/or ill equipped to continue in band.**

Possible solutions to consider:

- A. Give students a quality music education: a strong foundation which includes a beautiful, characteristic tone, an understanding of rhythm, a good embouchure and hand position, and knowledge of the correct fingerings. Teach them to read music on their own. Make them musically literate.
- B. Be careful when you make instrument assignments, or okay a student to play a particular instrument. Be sure that they demonstrate the ability or physical qualities necessary to insure at least a reasonable expectation for success. If possible, let them play the instrument they wish to play because they will be more inclined to practice that one rather than the one you selected for them. However, if they are not physically suited for their choice, tell them your reservations. I am not saying let your band's instrumentation go out the window, to let every mother's child play drums or sax, but rather to consider the child's choice, not just your needs, when helping them select their instruments.

- 2. They are bright and interested in many things, eager to try new and different subjects. Possible solutions to consider**

- A. Middle school is the age that students want to and should try many different activities, the right time for them to experiment and find their strengths and interests. It is normal for them to show an interest in many courses the school offers. Therefore, your recruiting should probably not be confined to just one year. Continue to remind students how much fun band is, and all the benefits they will get from having music as a part of their lives: personal satisfaction, a way to express themselves, higher test scores when they take SAT or ACT for college, etc.
- B. Remember why students signed up for band in the first place: they wanted to play an instrument, and not just in class. They wanted to perform, so play concerts. Let students play for each other in class, selections of their own choosing. Make Fridays "Play Day," when students play solos or compositions they created.
- C. Your students joined to play in a band, and while clarinet class or tuba class accelerates their progress and streamlines your teaching, it doesn't always fulfill their expectations. They had in mind playing with everyone else, like they heard your school's A Band when you came to the elementary school to perform for them. They hear themselves playing real, grownup music, not single line versions of Twinkle, Twinkle. Use modern technology, like the Smart Music version of the 21st Century band book with all those different accompaniments (country, full orchestra, jazz, rock, etc.). There is also a cd that accompanies the book that the child can play at home for his or her parents. Other books offer similar accompaniment cd's.
- D. Turn over ownership of the band to the students. Tell students what the day's objectives are up front so they share reaching the goals with you. Allow them to make some of the decisions about your band, such as what time the party begins, or whether you will have a picnic with everyone bringing his or her own sack lunch or if the dinner will be hot dogs, with each person turning in money to cover the cost. You continue to make all the other decisions; such as when the concerts will be held and what music the band will perform, though I often ask for input from students before I select festival music.

- E. Your students have to feel important. Don't ignore those less talented players, those who are sitting last chair. I don't know how J. R. McEntyre did it, but even though I was only a 7th grader in the 9th grade band, sitting about seventh or eighth in the flute section, I knew I was important to the success of the Bonham Junior High Band. When I couldn't find my band shoes on contest morning, my mother remarked, "I guess you just can't go." "I have to go," I wailed. "He needs me." There was no question in my mind about my importance to my band or to my teacher.

3. A new program has opened in the school, like broadcast journalism, and that teacher is searching for and recruiting bright, hard working students to make his/her new program a success.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. Make sure when it's time to sign up for next year's classes, cool things are going on in band: concerts, social activities, opportunities for individual performances such as recitals.
- B. Seek your building principal's help in protecting your band from being "raided".

4. They and their parents have failed to make a commitment to band.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. What is your screening process for having children join the band in the first place? Have you taught from the beginning that band is more than a one semester or one-year commitment? When you are recruiting for the band, tell students and parents that band requires at least a three-year commitment, through middle school or, better yet, a six-year commitment through high school.
- B. Begin talking immediately in your classes about how the skills the students are developing will help them next year when they get to play in the A or B Band at your school. Tell them how their good posture will really help them when they get into the marching band at Coronado High School Band in three years. Be positive. Say, "The more you practice, the more fun it is," not "Next year when you are in the advanced band you'll have to practice a whole lot more."
- C. Involve parents in your program by way of a booster or volunteer organization. Booster organizations take time, your time, but parents who help with organizational details of activities for their children become your ally when their child starts talking about quitting band.
- D. Remember that sometimes a financial commitment on the part of the family will help to keep a child from dropping band because the parents have made a monetary investment in your program.

5. They are leaving middle school and are frightened about entering high school, and/or the new part of band (marching). Their middle school teacher has not encouraged them to continue in band, or their to-be high school director has not contacted them to make them feel welcome.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. Contact each player personally to recommend that he or she remain in band. Don't just assume that since they are first chair that they know you think they should keep playing their instrument. A note is nice, but a personal telephone call to the child and/or his parents is better.
- B. High school directors may assign a high school player, perhaps the section leader or a freshman who attended that school the preceding term, to contact prospective band members.
- C. Consider using a WANTED poster, stating that the Odate High School Band wants Joanna Beeson as a member of the 2004-2005 Royal Knight Regiment.

6. "Been There, Done That" ... Their middle school band has gone on overnight trips; they've played music from the Grade 5 list and had numerous extra rehearsals, every morning and twice-a-week evening rehearsals to learn it; they've had to fundraise large amounts of money.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. Save some things for high school. If you want to take trips, take day trips. But, if you are using incentives, such as band trip only as the reason to stay in band, you are undermining and selling short the values of your band program.
- B. In the Dallas/Fort Worth area, take your beginners to Sandy Lake or to "Beach Within Reach" to a contest specifically designed for students of that age and ability level. In Houston, go the Spring's "Splashtown" contest. The San Antonio schools can attend a contest at Schlitterbahn. El Paso has a beginning band contest sponsored by UT El Paso. If your area doesn't host a similar event, get together with some area directors and create your own festival. C. Save the overnight trips for Honor Band, or a Midwest performance.
- C. When you fundraise, make all monies go to the general fund, which pays for each child to go on the day trip.
- D. Band parties at Six Flags, Wet and Wild, Astroworld or other parks are a grand reward at the end of the year, but only if they are one day trips.

7. Band costs too much money, takes too much time.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. If money is really the problem, help that child by finding a sponsor that will donate funds to defray his costs. Find an instrument for a needy child and use your band fund to help pay for his reeds and other equipment needs. Create a band scholarship to help students with financial problems. Don't let a family's lack of money be the reason a child cannot play in your band. Locate someone who can provide rides for a child so that he/she will be able to attend the sectionals you require in the advanced band.
- B. Is it the time commitment the child is afraid of, or the early morning rehearsals before regular school hours? Consider the amount of time you are asking of your students. Work harder on your own to eliminate time that you actually need students present. e.g. Don't waste your band's time by having them wait while you copy music. Have their music ready for them. Set up the band room before they arrive. Don't use their time to do menial tasks. It may take more of your time, but they will not feel "put-upon."

8. Athletics and the student's perceived idea of conflicts

Possible solutions to consider

Work with your coaches to eliminate conflicts for children who are involved in both programs. Set your sectionals in the morning if the athletic teams work out in the afternoon. Be sure to check the athletic calendar before you set a concert date. If a child has a game, and you have a rehearsal, let him go to the game. If you have a concert and the team is practicing, ask for the child to attend your concert. If both are practicing, see if the student can trade out - once with you and the next time with them, or split 50/50 on time. If games and concerts or band competitions are in conflict, allow the student to choose, and honor his or her choice. Be flexible. Encourage your students to continue in both music and athletics because they enjoy both of them. Be the "good guy."

9. Music isn't relevant to their lives. They plan to be a doctor, or go to the Harvard, and therefore need to take all the high level academic classes.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. If all the brainy geeks are in the band, one will stay in if the others remain enrolled. So recruit the smartest children in each class, and continue to encourage them to remain band members. Cultivate them as leaders in the band. Be flexible with students enrolled in the EB program. (Coronado High School's drum major a few years ago was an IB scholar, a three-year All State horn player, who could only manage band during the Zero period. This young man is now enrolled, on scholarship, at MIT.)
- B. Remind youngsters that admissions officers at most universities are not just looking for good grades in Honors or AP courses, but for well-rounded individuals who show tenacity, who remain in activities, and do not just flit from one to another.
- C. It's true. Music does make you smarter, and tests show that students involved in music activities, such as band, do better on standardized tests. The longer they are in the band, the better their scores are.

Other thoughts

1. When a child comes to tell you he or she wants to drop out of band, just tell them "No." Find out the reason they wish to drop out and insist upon a cooling off period. I usually ask the child to try very hard to **pretend** to like band and do everything I ask for a period of two -three weeks. If at the end of that time they still want to drop, I will allow it. 90% of the time, we work out our difficulties, (since this is the first I've been aware of their concerns and now I'm trying very hard to solve the problems) and sometimes the child has become so excited about band that they upgraded their instrument at the end of the cooling off time.
2. Compliment individuals and your band group for their work. Be specific; don't speak in generalities, but don't lie to them just to have something nice to say.
3. Always say things in a positive manner. That doesn't mean that you are always happy or that you don't have good discipline. Just tell your band the right way to do things and point out the right things that they do rather than finding fault all the time.
4. Is your band program a positive life changing experience? Every day in band needs to be positive. You can still be strict and have high expectations. Treat rehearsal etiquette like any other skill. Expect students to rehearse quietly. Practice stillness and silence without making it a punishment.
5. Everybody can be a winner in band. And there is no "bench" in band. In athletics, no matter how good your team is, someone loses. There are no winners and losers at our festivals. We have ratings, and the potential for all bands to be successful, to achieve the highest goal possible. In band, some other school doesn't determine your success; you are responsible for it yourselves.
6. Regularly communicate to parents/guardians and students in a meaningful manner.

Fun Activities

Costumed concerts, such as a Fright Night Concert for Halloween, a Come as Your Favorite Movie Character (historical figure, literary figure, television character), or Circus Days.

Theme concerts, such as a Sweetheart Concert for Valentine's, Presidents' Day Concert with patriotic or all-American music for early February, Potluck or Turkey Dinner along with Thanksgiving Concert, Cinco de Mayo, for early May

Combine music (band, jazz band, mariachis, orchestra, choirs, small ensembles from any or all groups), drama, dance, culinary arts, and visual arts for an evening extravaganza. Large groups perform onstage while smaller groups perform in the commons area alongside the art department display. Culinary arts classes provide refreshments.

Sit Anywhere (but your regular place) Day - self-explanatory. (Expect the tubas to choose the front row.) Rehearse as usual, but the band must really concentrate, as the sounds are coming from different spots in the room than where they are used to hearing them.

Director Does Not Speak Day. Try teaching without words, using only gestures. Don't allow the band to comment aloud or to tell others what you are trying to communicate.

Give awards for outstanding improvement, or musicianship, or service, at the end of each grading period. Pins work well, or buttons or certificates suitable for framing. Give many of these awards, but only one per child.

Select Student of the Month for each class period.

Give treats when the students do something extra, such as a piece of candy at the end of afterschool practice for beginners, or have a different section bring treats each Friday morning for the band to have after a full week of early-bird band.

Social Activities

My favorite - Death By Chocolate

Bowling - instrument teams work well. Offer prizes. Good monthly activity. Be sure to negotiate a good price with the bowling alley.

Picnic - early in the school year as a get-to-know-everyone party. Use a centrally located neighborhood park.

Class Christmas parties to be held at individual homes.

Movies - Saturday mornings before the theater opens. Price could, but does not have to, include popcorn and soda.

Lock-in - can work at the school or at a YMCA. Some schools use lock ins for extra rehearsals just as the students start working on All Region music. They hold clinics during the night, along with the other fun activities.

Bike rides, hikes, trips to the sandhills or the beach.

WHAT WORKS AT YOUR SCHOOL? SUGGESTIONS FROM AUDIENCE MEMBERS

TEACHING YOUR BAND TO SIGHTREAD

presented to Texas Bandmasters Association, July 2004

by Barbara Lambrecht, El Paso, Texas

Sightreading is a test of music literacy. It is your job to make sure your students are literate. Teach the fundamentals of music, all year, every day, every rehearsal, and sightreading will be easy for your students.

TO NE

1. Use these words, or others of your choosing, to describe the tone you want students to strive for: beautiful, clear, steady, firm, supported, rich, resonant, vibrant, characteristic.
2. Breathing exercises at the start of rehearsal get the body ready. Work for noiseless intake and full exhale.
3. Move lots of air.
4. Starting in your beginning classes, stress correct formation of the embouchure. Continue to monitor older students. Don't forget that posture affects the air intake and support, and therefore, the sound.
5. In your daily warmup use Remingtons, lip slurs, and scales (played slowly) to develop embouchure and tone, and to extend range. Include practice on mouthpiece alone to develop embouchure and tone. Work to make the same quality of sound in all registers, at all dynamic levels.
6. Introduce vibrato for appropriate instruments.
7. Provide examples of great players: symphony performers, commercial recordings (video and audio), and class role models. Encourage student attendance at live recitals and concerts by professional players.

TECHNIQUE AND KEY AWARENESS

1. Scales and scale exercises are tried and true technique builders.
2. Include major and chromatic scales (minor for high school.)
3. Additional scale things to try:
 3. Students play scales and recite the order of sharps and flats individually as others listen and determine accuracy.
 4. Students write the sharps and flats in their proper locations on the staff and name scale notes in the various keys or write scale notes on the music staff, placing proper sharps or flats where needed.

ARTICULATION

1. Work for consistency throughout the band: "matched articulation."
2. Remember that the ends of notes are just as important as the starts of them: "matched note length."
3. *The Taffanel-Gaubert Mechanism Studies for Flute* gives twelve different articulations to use on scale studies. Use these on exercises you devise, or use the woodwind option 3 warmups, in eight articulations, in the *Foundations for Superior Performance* band book by Jeff King and Rich Williams.

RHYTHM

1. Young, inexperienced students have the most rhythm trouble on long notes, ties, and rests.
2. Teach your band to look at stems, not just the note heads.
3. Have a counting system and use it. Make sure that individual students actually understand it and are not parroting what others around them are counting. Use foot tap, and clap rhythms while counting aloud. Individual counting aloud is mandatory.
4. Sightread rhythm sheets for chair tests.
5. Write notes and rest patterns on the board, and have students identify note values as well as count the rhythm.
6. Written tests give you a good picture of whether or not students understand subdivision. Also have students draw notes, compose their own rhythm patterns and write rhythms you dictate.
7. On new music or new lines in the book, have students count out loud, tap, clap, air band, buzz, or sing exercises prior, to playing. Or, divide the class in half: one group claps while the other half plays.
8. Supplemental materials: pages of teacher prepared rhythm drills, commercially prepared slides or flash cards, and Master Theory workbook/ worksheets.

Here are some good books to use for rhythm, technique, learning music reading, and warmup:

<i>14 Weeks to a Better Band</i>	Roger Maxwell/Barnhouse Publications
<i>25 LaZarus-Corrcone Studies</i>	Harold Rusch/Belwin Mills
<i>101 Rhythmic Rest Patterns</i>	Grover Yaus/Belwin/Warner Bros.
<i>204 Progressive Sight Reading Tunes</i>	Roger Winslow/Gore
<i>Division of Beat</i>	McEntyre, Haines/Southern Music
<i>Division of Measure</i>	Grover Yaus/Belwin.
<i>Exercises for Ensemble Drill</i>	Fussell/ Warner Bros
<i>Foundations for Superior Performance</i>	Williams, King/Kjos
<i>Hal Leonard Intermediate and Advanced Methods</i>	Hal Leonard
<i>Harmonized Rhythms</i>	Forque, Thornton/Kjos
<i>The Logical Approach to Rhythmic Notation</i>	Phil Perkins/Logical
<i>Rhythm and Rests</i>	Frank Erickson/Alfred
<i>Rhythm Master</i>	Southern Music
<i>Rubank Advanced Methods</i>	Rubank
<i>Sight Reading for Band Series (1-4)</i>	Evans, Nelson/Southern Music
<i>Symphonic Band Technique</i>	Rhodes ,Bienchenk! Southern Music
<i>Teaching Rhythm</i>	Joel Rothman/JR Pub.
<i>TRI (Technique, Rhythm, Intonation)</i>	Garner, Haines, McEntyre/South. Mus.
<i>Winning Rh.ythins</i>	Ed Ayola/Kjos

LISTENING SKILLS

1. Focusing on listening skills in the band classroom will continue to develop sound awareness, sound discrimination and sound sensitivity. Developing listening skills will assist students with these things:
 - a. The ability to concentrate
 - b. The ability to understand what one is listening to
 - c. The ability to remember sounds and sound sequences.
2. The ability to concentrate is essential to the listening process. Students must be able to remember what they have heard because of the abstract nature of the music, which is sound passing in time. 2. Choose music that will capture the attention and interest of students. Music that has strong rhythms, appealing melodic flow, obvious contrasts or unusual tone colors will usually spark the students' interest. Students will need time to develop their listening skills to be able to listen objectively to music that is unfamiliar to them.
3. Students will bring their own varied perspectives and associations, including their unique cultural and personal perspectives to the listening process. If students feel comfortable bringing in and discussing their own music, they will be more receptive to approaching other less familiar music in a similar fashion.
4. Remember, people respond to music in various ways and at different levels.

ANALYSIS

1. As your band learns music during the year teach them to analyze the music. Focus on the elements present within a piece of music and look for the relationships between and among these elements. Teach the band to recognize the pattern of organization and overall structure of the music (form).
2. The following are examples of questions to consider during analysis,

AND THEY ARE THINGS YOU WILL LOOK FOR IN THE SCORE OF THE UIL SIGHTREADING PIECE:

- Does the music have repetition? Contrast? Is the repetition exact or a variation?
- How does the composer/musician create variety?
- Is there tension in the music? How is it created? Is the tension resolved? Can you identify phrases that are alike and similar?
- What timbres are present and how are they created?
- What does the composer/musician do to try and catch your attention ("hooks")? Is there syncopation involved? How is it used?

- What is the tonality used? (Major, minor, pentatonic, other?)
 - Can you identify the sections of a song (introduction, chorus and verse) and the organization or form of the music (for example; two - part, AB; three-part, ABA; rondo, ABACA)?
3. The particular way the ingredients of music are combined or put together creates style in music. Style refers to the musical characteristics of a particular composer, musician, culture, region or period. This might refer to the music of the Romantic era, music from South America, or the music of the Beatles or Percy Grainger.

PREPARATION FOR SIGHTREADING

1. Students should be able to make a beautiful sound, play scales, read rhythms, read articulations, and know common terms and signs, terms such as andante, moderato, allegro, allegretto, maestoso, grandioso, cantabile, sostenuto. Common signs would include repeats, 1st and 2nd endings, railroad tracks, fermatas, D. S. (at Fine, al Coda), D.C (remember that you do not take repeats when you have a D. S. or D. C. unless the music calls for repeats.)
2. Students need to know where they are in the measure, which beat they are on, and which beat YOU are on.
3. You can find out the criteria, (keys, time signatures, and rhythms) that composers use to write the music for your school's classification. This information is available on the UIIL website.
4. Start preparing for sightreading contest at the beginning of the year. Read EASY tunes, and many of them so that your band will feel confident. When they are successful, they will enjoy reading at sight. 5. Closer to the actual event, practice sightreading the way you will do it on contest day (timed, etc.)

PREPARATION FOR THE ACTUAL CONTEST

1. Read the sheet to see what criteria the judges use in evaluating your band's performance. Share that information with your students.
2. Teach your band how to study their parts. I use KTTDC (key, time, tempo, dynamics, changes). Some beginning books use STARS (Signatures, tempo, accidentals, repeats, signs). Students should look for repetition of rhythms and melodies. My band touches the key signature in the upper left hand corner, then slides down to the bottom, touching the key signature at the start of each line to discover if and where the key changes.
3. Coach your students in the art of asking questions (1) LOUDLY (2) First identify a place, like "Square 32" and count from there, before or after, rather than saying "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 before 32." (3) Have the question in mind before they ask it to avoid stutters (4) Ask all questions at the end UNLESS you miss some pertinent piece of information, like "Mrs. Lambrecht, is there a key change at 36?"
4. First chairs should ask questions they think members of their section might miss, such as, "Is C flat the same as B natural?"
5. Pre-assign parts, perhaps putting your second best player as first chair second part.
6. Since many students get lost on rests when they sightread, train your band to count rests on their fingers and aloud (but softly). First chairs can check the section counting. I used to teach beginners to bring their instruments to the knee two bars before the end of extended rests, and to the face on the downbeat of the last measure of rest. If anyone was lost, they quickly got with the rest of the section, and we had fewer missed entrances.
7. Vary your warmup tempo, or volume, or style, to train your students to watch closely and to follow you.
8. Touch your music. Use this sense to enhance sight and hearing. We have five senses. Students use two of them - sight (looking at the music), and hearing (listening to your instruction.) Add touch, as in touching the music at important spots such as repeats, accidentals, key signatures, and changes of key and time and tempo and touching the instruments (fingering the notes). Please, touch with fingers, not instruments or sticks. As Jim Sudduth used to say, "Absorb through the skin to the bloodstream, to the brain."
9. Teach your band to, "Air Band" with instruments in play position. Put the brass mouthpieces on chins. Place flute lip plates to the right or left of the lips. Then use fingers, valves, slides, sticks and AIR You can practice articulation in this way.

JUST BEFORE THE BIG DAY

1. Make a set of time cards (10, 9, 8, 7, 6, etc.) large enough that you can see them from the podium when your assistant or spouse holds them up behind the back row of your band. I use time cards to eliminate the spoken interruptions from the timekeeper which tend to distract my students.
2. Arrange for water (cold) for your band between the stage and SR room (not just a bottle for you). And you will probably want additional water for yourself after talking nonstop for ten minutes.
3. Put into your coat pocket paper clips for any D. C. al Coda, etc.
4. Tell the band what warmup note they will play after the explanation at contest. I prefer not to play a new scale or note (Concert Eb instead of our usual Concert F or our Remington exercise) just because of the key of the sightreading piece. If, in your at-home practice you vary the scale before you sightread, then, by all means do that in the room.

ON THE DAY, IN THE ROOM

1. Are you wearing uniforms? If so, be "uniform." Wear the same socks, shoes.
2. Make the setup be like at home. Adjust chairs until they are just like things are in your home band room. Don't forget to adjust stand height.
3. Train the band to place their music under their chairs so you don't mix it up with the sightreading music.
4. Enter the room quietly, in a businesslike manner. Remind your students to look at the judge who gives the instructions and to look at you or at their music during the study time. Perhaps let them look around the new and different sightreading room before you start. Then remind them not to look around.
5. If the sightreading music is in a folder, have your students remove it from the folder when they check it to make sure it is the correct piece and the correct part.
5. If you teach a young band, perhaps a middle school second or third band where the large percentage of students are at this kind of contest for the first time, be sure you keep them engaged. The first row will finger along, but realize that the back row will hide behind their stands. Those lazy trombones will do anything to keep from unlocking that slide. Monitor them.

THINGS YOU MUST DO IN YOUR EXPLANATION

1. Identify the pitfalls.
2. Establish all tempos and changes of tempo. Don't just assume the band will follow you. Show them during the general explanation.
3. Look for and call to the band's attention repetition of rhythm and melodies.
4. Warn the band of thin scoring, and soft, especially if thinly scored, passages.
5. Identify minor keys. Accidentals are the telltale sign.
6. If dynamic contrasts are few, exaggerate them. Thinly scored spots, especially if they are marked piano, I tend to overplay. But don't say "Pianissimo - play out." Students might really be confused, unless you have told them prior to the contest that if only one or two instruments are playing and the marking is soft, you'll ask them to overplay the volumes for the sake of confidence.
7. On key changes, don't just say "add an A flat." Identify the measure(s) and if you teach a young band, check their fingers.

USING YOUR TIME

1. GENERAL EXPLANATION

- A. First, look at the flute part to get the road map: keys, repeats, time changes. The flute part is no more than two pages, so you can find those things much easier than thumbing through 12 - 20 pages of score.
- B. Try to get to the end of the piece during this time so that during your 3-4 minutes of being able to sing or count, you are actually doing that, explaining tricky rhythms or singing important passages.
- C. Discuss style, perhaps relating it to music you played onstage. Remind the band about phrasing, not chopping off every two bars.
- D. Let the band know who has the melody, and who has accompaniment so that they can balance to the melody.

2. SUMMATIVE EXPLANATION

- A. DO sing. Practice your sightsinging. When the line goes up, sing up. Join your church choir. You are a musician, you should be able to sing. I finger my instrument when I sing. It helps me find pitches.
- B. Learn to sing one line and clap another to demonstrate how parts fit together.
- C. Vary your singing, perhaps counting on pitch, change to calling out pitch note names if the section is a soli, or say on pitch "clarinets have this" or "low brass enter here" especially if you are jumping around from part to part.
- D. Don't stop early when explaining a tricky spot by saying "and so on" because many times the pitfalls are toward the end, perhaps the addition of a different or difficult rhythm.
- E. Last ten seconds, return to the opening to reestablish the key and tempo.
- F. After your warmup note, empty the water from the brass spit valves.

3. DON'T FORGET

- A. If you say, "Practice the fingerings to the scale in X key" give the band time to do so.
- B. You know the band's strengths and weaknesses. If your flutes never miss anything, there's no need to count things for them. Or, there might be no profit in talking to the percussion. They'll miss it anyway.

4. YOU HAVE CHOICES

- A. You can speak in a loud voice, talking at a fast speed to get everything done in the time allotted. Or you can speak softer, in a calm voice with slower talking to instill confidence.
- B. Tempos are yours to set. How slow or fast is your decision. Allegro - fast enough to be convincing in style, but not so fast that the band cannot look ahead or control technique. Avoid "tempo di Kamikazee"
- C. Should you start talking immediately to be sure you cover everything, or should you study the score a minute to find the pitfalls to make sure that you talk about the most important spots?

5. DID YOU KNOW

- A. The score for the sightreading music has each measure numbered, but the individual parts do not. They have only the numbers in large squares.
- B. There are not supposed to be solos in Texas UIL sightreading music. But remember that all percussion parts are, in reality, solo parts.
- C. Courtesy accidentals are confusing to students. After a key change some composers use courtesy accidents for a few measures and then remove them. The students wonder, "Was that Ab an accidental, and now I have A natural, or were they reminders that now I have Ab?"

6. REMEMBER

- A. Judges do watch the band during the explanation period.
- B. Good tone is always going to be the most important factor.
- C. Phrasing counts.
- D. Intonation is important in the sightreading room too.
- E. Balance to the melody.
- F. Judges are looking for bands that read confidently, with good style, balance, and convincing changes.
- G. Good bands are flexible and respond to their conductors. They listen to themselves play and correct errors quickly.

"When musicians are trained carefully and given a sound practical routine in basic fundamentals, they require no special coaching to become good sightreaders and players. Those who are not routined in basic fundamentals will be so weak in important phases of sight-playing that no last minute coaching will be of value." E. C. Moore

Good readers do two things: (1) they read ahead; (2) they memorize the patterns of sound they have just read.

These are the things performers must be able to do in order to sightread:

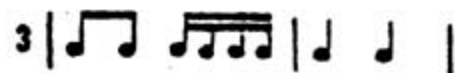
1. Recognize and understand key signatures. Be able to identify the "critical" note(s) in the key.
2. Recognize and understand time signatures, including cut time and 6/8 and other triple meters.
3. Recognize the sound of notes by their position on the staff. Be able to hear intervals correctly (especially important for brass players.)
4. Recognize and understand note values and be able to relate those to note groupings and rhythmic patterns. (Instant comprehension of note groupings spells success in sightreading.) Realize that although the actual values of notes change when the bottom number of the signature changes, the relationship of notes never change, i.e. quarter notes are always twice as long as eighth notes.
5. Recognize and be able to execute articulation patterns. *Foundations for Superior Performance* lists eight articulation patterns that can be used in its warmup exercises.
6. Recognize and understand the words and symbols by which tempo, dynamics, expression and style are indicated. (Be bilingual; speak "music.")
7. Have an understanding of basic music theory.
8. Have the ability to play in tune with good tone quality, throughout the entire range of the instrument.
9. Be able to count time accurately and incisively. Foot tap is important. (Use the left foot as it will jar the body less. Also, students have to think about using the left foot, especially if they are right handed.)
10. Be able to control breathing to make intelligent, musical phrases and play with expression.
11. Have the ability to tongue correctly.
12. Have a thorough knowledge of the correct fingerings, including alternate fingerings, for all notes in the playing range.
13. Be able to play at a steady tempo, even in technically challenging passages.

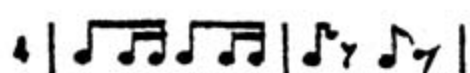
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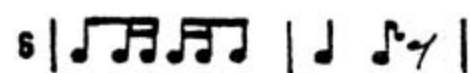
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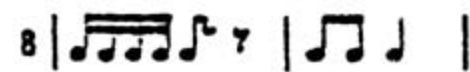
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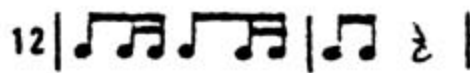
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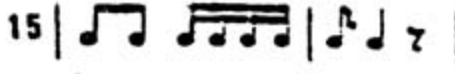
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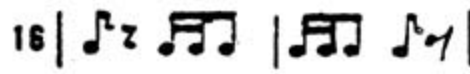
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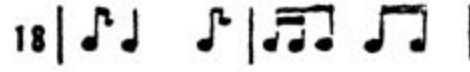
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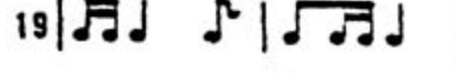
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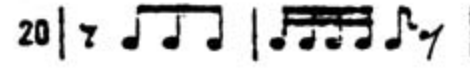
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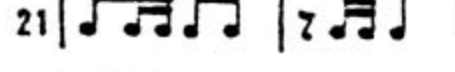
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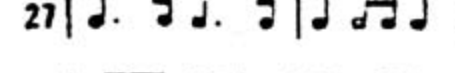
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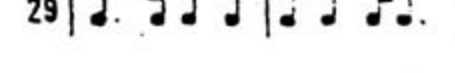
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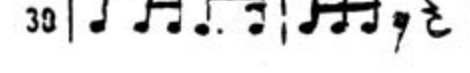
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played music from the Grade 5 list and had numerous extra rehearsals, every morning and twice-a-week evening rehearsals to learn it; they've had to fundraise large amounts of money.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. Save some things for high school. If you want to take trips, take day trips. But, if you are using incentives, such as band trip only as the reason to stay in band, you are undermining and selling short the values of your band program.
- B. In the Dallas/Fort Worth area, take your beginners to Sandy Lake or to "Beach Within Reach" to a contest specifically designed for students of that age and ability level. In Houston, go the Spring's "Splashtown" contest. The San Antonio schools can attend a contest at Schlitterbahn. El Paso has a beginning band contest sponsored by UT El Paso. If your area doesn't host a similar event, get together with some area directors and create your own festival.
- C. Save the overnight trips for Honor Band, or a Midwest performance.
- D. When you fundraise, make all monies go to the general fund, which pays for each child to go on the day trip.
- E. Band parties at Six Flags, Wet and Wild, Astroworld or other parks are a grand reward at the end of the year, but only if they are one day trips.

7. Band costs too much money, takes too much time.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. If money is really the problem, help that child by finding a sponsor that will donate funds to defray his costs. Find an instrument for a needy child and use your band fund to help pay for his reeds and other equipment needs. Create a band scholarship to help students with financial problems. Don't let a family's lack of money be the reason a child cannot play in your band. Locate someone who can provide rides for a child so that he/she will be able to attend the sectionals you require in the advanced band.
- B. Is it the time commitment the child is afraid of, or the early morning rehearsals before regular school hours? Consider the amount of time you are asking of your students. Work harder on your own to eliminate time that you actually need students present. e.g. Don't waste your band's time by having them wait while you copy music. Have their music ready for them. Set up the band room before they arrive. Don't use their time to do menial tasks. It may take more of your time, but they will not feel "put-upon."

8. Athletics and the student's perceived idea of conflicts

Possible solutions to consider

Work with your coaches to eliminate conflicts for children who are involved in both programs. Set your sectionals in the morning if the athletic teams work out in the afternoon. Be sure to check the athletic calendar before you set a concert date. If a child has a game, and you have a rehearsal, let him go to the game. If you have a concert and the team is practicing, ask for the child to attend your concert. If both are practicing, see if the student can trade out - once with you and the next time with them, or split 50/50 on time. If games and concerts or band competitions are in conflict, allow the student to choose, and honor his or her choice. Be flexible. Encourage your students to continue in both music and athletics because they enjoy both of them. Be the "good guy."

9. Music isn't relevant to their lives. They plan to be a doctor, or go to the Harvard, and therefore need to take all the high level academic classes.

Possible solutions to consider

- A. If all the brainy geeks are in the band, one will stay in if the others remain enrolled. So recruit the smartest children in each class, and continue to encourage them to remain band members. Cultivate them as leaders in the band. Be flexible with students enrolled in the IB

program. (Coronado High School's drum major a few years ago was an IB scholar, a three-year All State horn player, who could only manage band during the Zero period. This young man is now enrolled, on scholarship, at MIT.)

B. Remind youngsters that admissions officers at most universities are not just looking for good grades in Honors or AP courses, but for well-rounded individuals who show tenacity, who remain in activities, and do not just flit from one to another.

C. It's true. Music does make you smarter, and tests show that students involved in music activities, such as band, do better on standardized tests. The longer they are in the band, the better their scores are.

Other thoughts

A. When a child comes to tell you he or she wants to drop out of band, just tell them "No." Find out the reason they wish to drop out and insist upon a cooling off period. I usually ask the child to try very hard to **pretend** to like band and do everything I ask for a period of two-three weeks. If at the end of that time they still want to drop, I will allow it. 90% of the time, we work out our difficulties, (since this is the first I've been aware of their concerns and now I'm trying very hard to solve the problems) and sometimes the child has become so excited about band that they upgraded their instrument at the end of the cooling off time.

B. Compliment individuals and your band group for their work. Be specific; don't speak in generalities, but don't lie to them just to have something nice to say.

C. Always say things in a positive manner. That doesn't mean that you are always happy or that you don't have good discipline. Just tell your band the right way to do things and point out the right things that they do rather than finding fault all the time.

D. Is your band program a positive life changing experience? Every day in band needs to be positive. You can still be strict and have high expectations. Treat rehearsal etiquette like any other skill. Expect students to rehearse quietly. Practice stillness and silence without making it a punishment.

E. Everybody can be a winner in band. And there is no "bench" in band. In athletics, no matter how good your team is, someone loses. There are no winners and losers at our festivals. We have ratings, and the potential for all bands to be successful, to achieve the highest goal possible. In band, some other school doesn't determine your success; you are responsible for it yourselves.

F. Regularly communicate to parents/guardians and students in a meaningful manner.

Fun Activities

Costumed concerts, such as a Fright Night Concert for Hallowe'en, a Come as Your Favorite Movie Character (historical figure, literary figure, television character), or Circus Days.

Theme concerts, such as a Sweetheart Concert for Valentine's, Presidents' Day Concert with patriotic or all-American music for early February, Potluck or Turkey Dinner along with Thanksgiving Concert, Cinco de Mayo, for early May

Combine music (band, jazz band, mariachis, orchestra, choirs, small ensembles from any or all groups), drama, dance, culinary arts, and visual arts for an evening extravaganza. Large groups perform onstage while smaller groups perform in the commons area alongside the art department display. Culinary arts classes provide refreshments.

Sit Anywhere (but your regular place) Day - self-explanatory. (Expect the tubas to choose the front row.) Rehearse as usual, but the band must really concentrate, as the sounds are coming from different spots in the room than where they are used to hearing them.

Director Does Not Speak Day. Try teaching without words, using only gestures. Don't allow the band to comment aloud or to tell others what you are trying to communicate.

Give awards for outstanding improvement, or musicianship, or service, at the end of each grading period. Pins work well, or buttons or certificates suitable for framing. Give many of these awards, but only one per child.

Select Student of the Month for each class period.

Give treats when the students do something extra, such as a piece of candy at the end of after-school practice for beginners, or have a different section bring treats each Friday morning for the band to have after a full week of early-bird band.

Social Activities

My favorite - Death By Chocolate

Bowling - instrument teams work well. Offer prizes. Good monthly activity. Be sure to negotiate a good price with the bowling alley.

Picnic - early in the school year as a get-to-know-everyone party. Use a centrally located neighborhood park.

Class Christmas parties to be held at individual homes.

Movies - Saturday mornings before the theater opens. Price could, but does not have to, include popcorn and soda.

Lock-in - can work at the school or at a YMCA. Some schools use lock ins for extra rehearsals just as the students start working on All Region music. They hold clinics during the night, along with the other fun activities.

Bike rides, hikes, trips to the sandhills or the beach.

WHAT WORKS AT YOUR SCHOOL? SUGGESTIONS FROM AUDIENCE MEMBERS