

THE OCD APPROACH TO TAKING A BAND TO UIL CONTEST

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CC 212

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UIL = University Interscholastic League

You need to identify early on if your band/orchestra is going to contest. As a young teacher, this decision needs to be made with you and the head director.

Eligibility

- **Make sure you are sending out progress reports all year long--as often as necessary with appropriate/borderline students.**

Can my band/orchestra go to UIL Contest?

- Trust your mentor to help you decide whether or not your band would have an educationally positive experience by going to UIL Contest.
- If so, the ensemble must have regular sectionals to prepare all music.
- After eligibility kicks in, there must be enough students left in order for the ensemble to have an educationally beneficial experience.
- If your mentor/clinician suggests that you switch to a more appropriate “named” selection for your contest program—whether it be 2 months prior to or 2 weeks before your contest date—listen to them and trust that their recommendation will create a more positive experience for everyone involved.

Checklist of UIL Contest-related tasks

- Consult the C&CR, which is the Constitution and Contest Rules. You need to refer to any new information each time it is revised.
- **Submit the appropriate UIL forms—preferably a few days before the deadline.**
- **Make sure you send a letter to the faculty about students missing class and possibly getting their work early. Get a principal’s signature on the letter.**
- **Order scores at least one month prior to your contest!!!**
 - Before dealing with out-of-print or out-of-stock scores, contact your colleagues to see if you can borrow scores from them.
 - If you end up having to use photocopies, you **MUST** attach a copy—to each of the three scores—from the music company and/or publisher granting permission for you to use a photocopy for the sole purpose of _____ Contest or _____ Festival.

- You must bring a numbered score of **each selection** for **each judge** with your school stamp on them. If a particular piece has dual staves on any given page, it would be a good idea to maybe hi-lite the second staff. On each page, it would be helpful to neatly circle the first number.
- Previous judges' markings must be completely erased from "used" scores. Have a co-worker go through the scores and double-check. Many times, big circles and words can still be seen even if they have been "erased." You are encouraged to use an art gum eraser. Post-it notes should not be found on any scores with eligibility information, etc. You should not call attention to anything that may not be a factor in the judges' final rating.
- If your eligibility has changed in any way since you submitted your original forms, you may need to bring an updated form with you. ****Check with the contest chair regarding this issue.**
- Set up transportation WEEKS in advance, following all protocol in your district.
 - Allow time for traffic.
 - If the bus drivers know back roads, they need to take them.
 - In larger districts, you may have to charter buses.
- Arrange to pick up and utilize a truck for your large equipment.
- Assign a loading crew.
- Set up meals if needed. Put organized and efficient parent volunteers in charge of this.
- **Set-up charts will need to be submitted to the contest chairman prior to the contest.**
 - If you are going to use risers, make sure the site is providing them.
 - If they are not being provided, you must bring your own and bring band dads to move them.
- Find out the instrumentation and percussion requirements of the sightreading piece you will be reading.
- **Percussion equipment and personnel decisions must be made.**
 - You need to know what percussion equipment is being provided.
 - As much as possible, bring your own equipment and set-up crew.
 - A percussion check-list must be created by your percussionists prior to your contest day. This must be double-checked by either you or your percussion specialist.
 - Depending on the contest stage, you may need to bring very thick blankets and/or carpet strips to put underneath your battery percussion instruments. A towel may also be brought to place over your bass drum head.
 - You need to bring some sort of felt-covered "surface" for placement of triangles, various mallets and other small color instruments....so no accidental textures will enter your program performance.
- Unique equipment that must be brought with you includes towels for mutes, flute/piccolo stands, B-flat and utility clarinet stands, etc.

- **If students are ineligible, they cannot go to the contest---even as part of the moving crew.**
- Someone on your staff needs to travel with you in order to be on stage to assist with and check the set-up before the students enter the stage.
- When going to UIL, you must bring another director from your staff, your percussion specialist (if applicable), your moving crew and parents to assist with supervision, uniforms and meals (whether students eat on/off the bus or at an eating establishment on the way back to the home campus), etc.
- Make sure you bring a medical form for every student, including contact phone numbers for parents as well as alternate emergency contacts.
- Before departing your campus, it would be a good idea to have a brief “inspection” of uniforms, instruments and related maintenance items, folders/binders, etc.
- It may be necessary to have assigned seating based on individuals or instrument “families”, etc.
- Students should already be in their uniform when they get on the buses. Male students should be allowed to put on their bowties, cummerbunds and tuxedo coats once getting off the bus. This time needs to be taken into consideration on your itinerary.
- You are encouraged to have students begin a “silent study time” of their music when you are halfway to your contest site. This means that their music folders/binders need to be with them on the bus. Some sort of a verbal “signal” should be given to students to begin this time. This “no talking” mode should continue as students get off the buses.
- When you get to the site:
 - Send someone from your staff inside to check-in and drop off your scores (and updated eligibility form if applicable).
 - Male students should exit the buses first---with their instruments and music---so they can report to parent volunteers who are assisting with bowties, cummerbunds and tuxedo coats. Make sure there is access to sewing equipment and/or pins, etc. After being completely dressed, they should then assemble their instruments.
 - After all male students are off the buses, female students should exit buses---with their instruments and music---and assemble their instruments.
 - **No instruments should be assembled on the bus!!**
 - Students assemble all instruments outside and carefully put their cases back on the bus.
 - All students should be in their full uniform before they enter the building.
 - Before entering the building, it is **strongly** recommended that you have students form a “close” set-up around you. It is during this time that you can make sure that everyone is there...and has with them their instruments, music, reed guards, water bottles, valve oil, etc.

- The students must file in and out of the warm-up room, stage and sightreading room in order of the set-up for your **first piece**. You also need to know and identify which “end student” will lead the group from one location to the next.
- Once the warm-up has started, there is not time for students to use the restroom, get a drink, etc. These things need to be taken care of PRIOR to students entering the warm-up room. Be prepared to make an exception regarding the use of the restroom.

Warm-Up Room Procedures

- It is a very good idea to have a few parent volunteers in the warm-up room.
- As students are sitting down, remind them to put their music in whatever order you plan to review. Also, remind students to set their instrument lengths correctly--just like they do in the band hall.
- **Do not have students play a lot in the warm-up room. Bands that “over” warm-up usually have weak performances due to fatigue.**
- Positioning, articulating with air, saying note names, etc. are great “non-playing” techniques you can utilize during your warm-up time.
- Be cautious in tuning and/or changing student’s instrument lengths. Tuning sometimes takes more time than you think.
- Students must be trained to move quickly and efficiently in between pieces.
- A monitor will send for your percussionists before your time has ended. The monitor should lead them to the stage with their equipment.
- **When the monitor says your time is up, that means it is time for your group to report to the stage. You need to stop warming up! If you exceed the time allowed for performance, you can be disqualified.**
- You should lead your students from the warm-up room to the stage. A few parent volunteers should be the last to exit the room. Students should walk very seriously and quietly to the stage.

Transitioning from Warm-Up Room to Contest Stage

- While you are in the warm-up room, a director from your staff should be on stage to make sure that the set-up crew is building the set-up correctly—exactly like it is done at the home campus. This director should make sure the chairs, stands, risers, shells, director podium and director stand are all in place.
- Since the percussionists have been setting up while you were still in the warm-up room, they should have time to play a few sounds on various instruments to become aware of volume, heights of instruments, etc. Percussionists should be given strict perimeters as to what they should play...and for how long.
- Lead your students on stage. Students must be taught how to walk with their instruments (especially French horns, saxophones and bassoons). Judges many times are watching to see where bassoon bocals have been placed.....how

- instrument bells and slides are protected, etc. Positive first impressions could possibly be made by this entry procedure.
- While students are filing on stage, parents should be “pre-encouraged” NOT to shout out their child’s name, wave, or take pictures either on the stage or at the foot of the stage. This is inappropriate and will be heard/seen by your adjudication panel.
 - Approve the set-up (including risers and shells) before the students sit down. You give a signal for each and every row to sit down, with the assumption that there are not missing or extra stands, chairs, etc.
 - Replace any “sinking” stands.
 - Discuss with the announcer the order and pronunciation of your pieces and composers.
 - Perform a **short** warm up:
 - Short articulation sequence
 - F concerts
 - Chorale
 - Do NOT:
 - Tune individuals
 - Perform intervals past concert D
 - DO NOT EXPOSE THINGS THAT YOU KNOW DO NOT SOUND GOOD. Your warm-up creates the first impressions of your judges.
 - Students should stay in “ready” position following the warm-up.
 - The director stays on stage, slightly off to the side, and looking at the judges.
 - Do not chew gum during your stage or sightreading process. Set a good example for your students.
 - After the band is announced, be prepared for little or no applause. Make sure you have told your parents this ahead of time.....and that is perfectly acceptable for them to applaud at appropriate times.
 - You are strongly encouraged to conduct through the first few measures of each piece “off the podium” with your students. They should of course be positioning and mentally preparing to have a successful “start” to each of your pieces.
 - After each of your three pieces has ended, students’ instruments stay in **playing position** until you give them a signal to go to ready position.
 - There should absolutely NO rustling of music during applause. Students should be already trained to wait for a signal from you. Similarly, percussionists should not move music or ANY equipment until this signal is given.
 - Do not have sections or soloists stand after any pieces. This would, however, be appropriate at a festival.
 - It is not necessary to make eye contact with any of the three judges between pieces and wait for a signal to go on to your next piece. Proceed from piece to piece, allowing time for your percussionists to move equipment, change timpani pitches, etc. During this time, students should be studying the beginning of their next piece.

- After your last piece, you may choose to have your entire ensemble stand at the same time. Students should stand square to the audience and smile. ☺
Remember that this is UIL Contest, not a Winter or Spring Concert.
- After applause has ended, tell your students that they did a good job....but have another performance to complete their UIL Contest experience.
- Remind students not to leave anything on stage.....**ESPECIALLY** percussionists.
- Allow the percussionists to exit the stage first with their equipment. You may have a few parents come up on stage quickly to assist. Percussionists must take everything from the stage out into the hallway and to the sightreading room.
 - All percussion equipment needs to be brought into the sightreading room, regardless of whether it is going to be used or not.
 - Equipment that is not needed is to be simply put off to the side.
- If you have students sitting in different sightreading chairs than your last prepared piece played on stage, make sure your students exit the stage in their sightreading order.

Sightreading Procedures

- **It is very important that you go through the sightreading procedure with the students THROUGHOUT THE YEAR—not just right before pre-UIL and UIL Contest. You cannot “cram” for sightreading; it is waaaaaaay too stressful for you AND your students. ☹**
- The way students walk into the room after their stage performance affects the judging panel.
- Have a water bottle with you.
- Any parents who attend UIL should be “pre-encouraged” to watch the sightreading process. Instruct them to sit/stand in an appropriate area in the room (preferably behind your set-up or on the sides). No videotaping or recording of ANY NATURE is allowed.
- Do not assume anything—especially with middle school/junior high students. Students tend to mentally relax after their stage performance. Stress the importance of mental focus during the sightreading process.
- Percussionists should have entered the room first to set up their equipment. This should allow you to focus on your wind players.
- Before the actual day of your contest, your percussionists should be pre-assigned to specific instruments/parts. If you have more percussionists than parts, the “extra” students need to shadow behind (if not right next to) the actual performers. These decisions should NOT be made in the sightreading room.
- Judge(s) will greet the conductor. If you are friends with a judge, remain very professional. You may be more comfortable introducing *yourself* to the judges. If you choose to do this, make sure they are not still writing comments on the previous group.
- If you happen to have a student with disabilities, it may be appropriate to discreetly notify one of your judges.

- All students need to stand until you approve that the set up is correct. You give a signal for each and every row to sit down, with the assumption that there are not missing or extra stands, chairs, etc. Students' folders, etc. should be placed under their chairs. **Nothing should be on their stands.** During this time, students should be in a relaxed yet professional position.
- Replace any "sinking" stands.
- If the sightreading room is unusually hot, a judge may allow your male students to remove their coats if you are okay with that. **Male directors, however, MUST keep their suit/tuxedo coat on during the entire process.**
- As soon as rows have been seated, student workers will pass out folders. **This process can take from a few minutes to five or so minutes, depending on the size of your group. Be patient, especially if additional folders/copies need to be made. You and your students need to relax and be nice to the student workers.**
- At some point, check to see whether or not each measure is numbered in the student parts.
- A judge will confirm the conductor has received the instrumentation for the sightreading piece. Make sure the student workers are giving the correct parts to the right students. **They do not know which students play first part, second part, etc. You must be involved in this process.**
- A judge will remind the conductor of percussion requirements.
- A judge will inform the conductor of timpani pitches. If they have not been tuned by a judge already, you or a percussion specialist may do so.
 - **Timpani must be tuned before the general explanation begins.**
- The timekeeper (usually a host director or responsible high school student) will approach the conductor for preferences on time notifications. Remind this person to speak aggressively so you do not "miss" any of these notifications!
- Do not begin the judge's instructions until all percussionists are organized and still.
- When all students have a folder, a judge may introduce the adjudication panel and welcome your students to the sightreading room. **Students should show respect by looking, at all times, at this judge while they are speaking.**
- A judge will confirm that everyone has music. Students will then be asked to remove _____ from their folders. They will be asked to check and see if they have the correct part, including part assignment, correct key and correct clef for their instrument. Make sure your euphoniums have their part in the correct clef. After these things have been checked, students will be asked to put their music face down on their stands.
 - **While the students take out their music and check for the correct part, etc....and eventually turn it face down...they need to scan the page for tempo, key, accidentals, etc. in a very discreet way. They CANNOT begin fingering and making any sounds. This process only**

takes about thirty seconds (if that)! Train your students to do this when you are practicing at your campus.

- After problems (if any) are resolved and all is confirmed, the judge will ask: “This organization will be reading _____ which has been chosen for conference _____. Is this the correct conference for your organization?”
- A judge will ask if the director or any members of the group have either heard, read, rehearsed or performed _____.
- A judge will instruct your students that the time begins when the director asks them to turn their music over.

GENERAL EXPLANATION PERIOD

- Students should be called to their “ready position” if not already done so during the judges’ instructions. This posture should remain for the remainder of the sightreading process. Instruments should be in the straight, upright position or in their actual playing position. No instruments should be across a student’s lap or dangling to the floor.
- If the judge says “warning”, you have done something wrong and risk being disqualified if you repeat the infraction.
- When the students turn the piece over, you can immediately start talking about it; or you can give them 30 seconds of silent study. You should be studying during this time as well! Students should absolutely impress and catch the attention of the judges during this “study time.”
- Students should mentally “mark” their music with their “invisible pencil.” **A judge should NEVER see a student not complying with each and every instruction given by the director.**
- When practicing sightreading on your campus, inform students that some judges like to walk around during the instructional periods. Students should not be distracted by this.....or by the timekeeper.
- **FIRST**, identify the key signature(s). Students should finger the scale one octave in scale rhythm.
 - Identify the “critical notes” in your key(s). **“Show” fingerings around the room if you feel it is necessary.**
 - For Eb, Ab and Db concert, the 4th scale degree is the critical note.
 - For Bb, the 7th scale degree is the critical note.
 - For C and G, the 3rd and 7th scale degrees are the critical notes.
 - Have the students freeze on the critical scale degree(s). You need to then “show” the fingering(s) “around the room” and check student’s fingerings very quickly and

confidently. Students can also be showing their neighbors these fingerings.

- Have them find and “mark” the critical note(s) three times in their music.

- If there is a key change, regroup at the first key before time runs out
- At the middle school level, Bb, Eb and F are the likely keys

o **SECONDLY**, identify the time signature(s).

- There will most likely be a time signature change in Level II and above pieces.
- Try very hard to adhere to realistic/correct tempos.

o Have them point to/touch ritards, fermatas, caesuras, repeat signs, etc.

o Dynamic markings could be “boxed” or “hi-lited.”

o Judges like it when you make references/connections to your stage music.

o The use of individual student names is noted by judges.

o **You are allowed to count, snap, clap or tap consecutive beats in tempo; however, there should be no voice inflection that suggests an obvious reproduction of pitch, style, dynamics or other elements of the music.**

o **Do not call out every measure number and beat number.**

You are wasting time in which you could be reminding students about SO MANY other things. Besides, all sightreading pieces have the measures clearly numbered in the parts. It is only necessary to call out rehearsal numbers/letters.

- **Directors who call out each measure number and beat are showing the judges that they are not very knowledgeable...and/or do not know what the rules are.**

o **Students should never be seen NOT fingering by any of the three judges. When notes are played incorrectly or are fingered wrong, judges will attribute this to students not fingering when they had the chance. While students are positioning, they should be in ready position, with ALL instruments in their most upright carriage. Flutes can be on the left shoulder so you can see their fingers.**

- You can have the students “show you” certain fingerings.

o Percussionists may lightly touch mallet instrument keys.....lightly touch the snare drum....lightly stick on their legs.....etc.....as long as they are not making any audible sounds.

AREA. **DO NOT EXPOSE ANYTHING THAT YOU KNOW DOES NOT SOUND GOOD.** Your warm-up creates the first impression of your judges.

- 0 By using a forefinger, encourage your brass players to think about whether their first pitch of the piece is higher or lower than the very last pitch of whatever warm-up exercise you performed.
- 0 Before performing this warm-up, allow students to blow air **CAREFULLY** (especially middle school students) through their instruments, empty French horn water slides, empty brass spit valves, etc.
- 0 After this short warm-up, there should be **NO MORE TALKING** from the director!!!!!! Do not tell students to “play with confidence and great sounds...” “play with fast air” etc. You risk receiving a warning or disqualification from the judges.
- 0 Do not stall for time in any way (i.e. walking across the room to get your water bottle). During this time, students who fidget for another 30 seconds to a minute may cause a judge to **THINK** you are indeed stalling!
- 0 “Mouth” your normal/planned/practiced “count off” and perform piece. ☺ ☺ ☺

- After the piece is over:
 - 0 Expect the parents in attendance to applaud. Do not talk to the parents/students about how well, etc. the performance went.
 - 0 Judges will ask the students to put the music in the folder.
 - 0 Do not praise or get onto your students in front of the judges. They have to focus on completing your comment sheets. It is unprofessional for you to talk to your students about how they did, etc. in front of the judges. This could negatively influence your judges.
 - 0 Tell your students not to leave anything in the room, and identify the door from which they will exit.
 - 0 Students should not approach judges on their way out of the room.
 - 0 Students should file out of the room **QUIETLY**.
 - 0 Percussionists need to efficiently take all of their equipment outside.
 - 0 You can praise your students and give them information outside when you get to the buses—but nowhere near the door(s) from which you exited.

Before leaving the contest site

- Someone from your staff needs to go inside and check out, pick up the comment sheets and trophy (if applicable).

- With assistance from chaperones, students should return to buses with their belongings and wait for the director. All uniform and loading-related activities can take place during this time.
- When you return to your students (whether on or off the bus), do not project your personal opinions of your ratings and/or the quality/competence of the judges to your students or parents. If your ratings are not pleasing to you, do not become emotional and cry. ☹
- Double-check that all equipment has been properly loaded, and that students have their personal instruments, music and accessories loaded or with them.
- Double-check attendance of all students before leaving the site.

Contest Dress for Directors

- Ladies
 - Pant suit
 - Long dress
 - Sleeves *******no sleeveless ANYTHING!!!**
 - Shoes that are closed-toed and have a closed back as well
 - Appropriate hosiery
- Men
 - Tuxedo, regardless of the students' uniforms
 - Black socks and black shoes
- When you are getting ready, be sure not to just look in the mirror from the front, but also from the back!! ☺

THE OCD APPROACH TO TAKING A BAND **TO UIL CONTEST**

**Decisions That Should be Made at School Prior to Submission of UIL
Forms
Final Decision to Participate**

Eligibility

**UIL Contest-Related Tasks
Have C&CR Accessible
Forms
Letter to Faculty
Scores**

**Updated Eligibility Form
Transportation**

**Meals
Required Set-Up Charts**

Sightreading Percussion Requirements
Concert Performance Percussion Equipment

Wind Instrument Equipment

Staff and Parental Responsibilities

Prior to Loading Buses and the Most Effective Use of Travel Time
Inspection Inside Band Hall

Silent Study Time

Arrival and Disembarking of Buses

Concert Contest Site Sequence
Entering Site

Warm-up Room

Transitioning from Warm-up Room to Contest Stage

Concert Stage Etiquette

Sequence of Concert Stage Activities

Transitioning from Contest Stage to Sightreading Room

Sightreading Contest Site Sequence

Practice at Home!

Entering the Room

Director/Judge Interaction

Sightreading Procedures

General Explanation Period

Summary Explanation Period

Sightreading Performance

Exiting the Sightreading Location

Prior to Leaving the Contest Site

Staff Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

Your Responsibilities

Contest Attire

Ladies

Men