



Pedagogy From the Podium

CLINICIAN:

Robert Herrings

DEMONSTRATION GROUP:

Kealing Middle School Band

Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



2014 Patron Sponsor

JULY 27-30, 2014

HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Pedagogy From the Podium -

How to Continue to Develop the Technical and Musical Proficiency of Your Students Beyond their Beginner Year

Robert Herrings, Clinician, Artie Henry Middle School, Leander ISD

I. It's all about EXPECTATION!

- a. It is the expectation that students come prepared daily.
- b. Never be afraid to tell the students when their work is unacceptable. Give no false praise. When it's good, it's GREAT. When it's bad, it's simply unacceptable.
 - i. Relate this to the real world!
- c. When students do something well, celebrate!
 - i. It's NEVER a dull moment for a CHEER! 😊
- d. There is a misconception that kids are at the band hall until 8 or 9PM each night.
- e. We do not have technique classes that meet on Saturdays.

II. Team Teaching

- a. During all 7/8th grade performing band rehearsals, all directors are present.
- b. There are many splits that occur throughout the week.
 - i. Splits have specific goals set by the director.
 - ii. Weaker sections are pulled and worked with alone as necessary.
- c. HS percussion instructor pulls percussion at least twice a week.

III. Details...it's what makes a difference!

- a. Daily, address tone quality.
 - i. Tone Quality is the #1 priority. Do not accept sounds that are not fundamental.
- b. Address how students are sitting, holding their instruments, hand positions and their feet.
- c. Section sounds are addressed daily.
 - i. This starts in 6th grade after about the first month of playing.
 - ii. NEVER allow students to play louder than the person on their left or right.
 - iii. Do not go on unless they are matching side-to-side and front to back.

IV. Musicality...in everything you do.

- a. You have to teach musicality to the students.
- b. Start this in 6th grade.
 - i. Energize to the end of all notes played.
 - ii. Long air vs. short air.
 - iii. Direction to all notes and lines played.

- c. Define above concepts in 7/8th Grade.
 - i. Music is always coming from or going somewhere.
- d. Have the students mark phrases.
 - i. Where is the peak of the phrase?
- e. Stagger breathing.
 - i. Teach stagger breathing starting in 6th grade.
 - ii. Define it more in 7/8th grade.
 - iii. Students work out their own stagger breathing throughout music.

V. Technique Development

- a. At HMS, we use *Foundations for Superior Performance* for our scale and technique development.
- b. Do not reinvent the wheel. Modify for your program needs.
- c. Scale patterns and interval studies are key to technique development.
 - i. Do everything slow first and then add speed, as the kids are ready.
- d. By the Winter break, students in the Varsity Band are responsible for:
 - i. 8 Major Scales and their scale patterns and interval studies, as fast as possible with a great sound.
 - ii. By UIL, all 12 major scales.
 - 1. Scales are learned all slurred first, for evenness, and then we add the tongue.
 - iii. After UIL, we begin Minor Scales in all the keys.
 - 1. These are monumental in their technique development.
 - 2. Many are challenging, yes.
 - 3. Go slowly – accuracy is more important than speed.
 - 4. The kids LOVE the way they sound!
- e. Articulation
 - i. Do articulation exercises daily.
 - ii. Address where the tongue is hitting daily.
 - iii. *"Airspeed drives Articulation."*
 - iv. All notes should have a tonal center, no matter the length.
 - 1. Define the length of notes.
 - a. Full Value, $\frac{3}{4}$ length, $\frac{1}{2}$ length.
 - b. Use the foot to help with note length.
 - i. Ex: play to the upbeat.
 - 2. Consistent vowel sounds with articulation syllable.
 - a. *Oh, ah, ee.*
 - 3. Open throat releases.

VI. Sectionals...where the REAL teaching happens!

- a. Students attend a 1 hour and 15 minute sectional per week.
- b. The first 15 minutes are spent on instrument specific fundamentals.
 - i. Flutes on headjoints
 - ii. Long Tones

- iii. Brass buzzing
 - iv. Lip Slurs
 - v. Articulation (where is the tongue hitting, specifically by instrument)
- c. Address tone in every sectional.
 - i. Give the students feedback specific to them for tonal improvements.
- d. Students know what they are responsible for each week in sectionals.
 - i. This information is given the week before.
 - ii. They are given specific tempo markings.
 - iii. They are given a step-by-step process for working out specific technical demands.
 - iv. Teach ALL technique with no written articulations at all.
 - 1. When the students have mastered the notes and rhythms, we go back and add the written articulations and begin to develop the style.
- e. It is the expectation that students come with their sectional assignments learned.
 - i. If they show up unprepared, students are dismissed and do not receive credit for the sectional.
 - ii. Students have to make a phone call home.
 - iii. The sectional must be made up within the current week of sectionals or the zero stands.
 - 1. A make-up sectional due to being unprepared does not receive full credit.
- f. All individual testing and hearings are heard in sectionals.
 - i. Most of the time, it's an excerpt of what was due that week unless otherwise communicated to the students.
 - ii. During Region Band preparation, Non-Varsity kids are pulled during class.
 - 1. Non-Varsity students are also invited to the Varsity Band sectionals if they are trying out for Region Band and they are ready to move at the pace of that sectional.
 - a. This is determined by the director.

VII. Daily Rehearsals

- a. Students are taught the correct pyramid of balance, where to listen and when to listen where.
 - i. Do not go on until the balance is correct.
 - ii. Force students to use their ears and take responsibility for where their sound (individual and section) fits into the ensemble.

- b. Be sure students know what we will rehearse so they come prepared.
 - i. Students know on Friday what they are expected to have prepared by Monday & Tuesday.
 - 1. This forces directors to plan!
- c. Only rehearse music that has been addressed in sectionals during full ensemble rehearsals.
 - i. You can split to learn new material or to work out technical passages in color groups.
- d. Always tell students who have the melody vs. melody harmony vs. accompaniment.

VIII. Private Lessons

- a. Private lessons are strongly encouraged.
- b. Lesson teachers are there to help the individual student and build on their individual fundamental needs, not to teach the band music.
 - i. There are times where you can ask the lesson teachers to address something specific in the music, but that is not their main goal.
- c. Private teachers continue to help develop the individual players technique by doing instrument specific fundamentals that are student specific.
- d. Consult with your lesson teachers each week about student's progress.
 - i. They also come to us if there is an issue with a student not coming prepared to lessons.

IX. Motivation

- a. Teach the kids that the program is THEIR program, and no matter what, the band will only be as good as they want it to be.
 - i. Only as good as the weakest player.
- b. Section leaders take on a lot of responsibility.
- c. Teach a lot of life lessons. Teach music through life lessons.
 - i. Relate information to their lives. Something they can relate to and understand.
- d. Dance Parties!
 - i. Just Dance.
 - ii. "Radio edit" music.
- e. Pizza Parties.
- f. Sectional of the week.
 - i. Sectional of the week gets candy.
 - ii. Star on the board.

"Life is about choices. You decide!"