



Developing Middle School Ensemble Sound: A Multi-Year Guide

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One approach to developing intonation awareness, color, balance, and blend in middle school band

Basic Philosophy for Ensemble Development

- **The Goal – Sound the SAME**
 - **“Conforming in every detail; not different”**
- What - The 4 “Ts”
 - Tone
 - Tuning
 - Time
 - Touch
- How - Levels of Listening
 - #1 - Individual
 - #2 - Section
 - #3 - Color Groups
 - #4 - Full Ensemble

It starts with your beginners! Develop players!

- Basic Fundamentals and Objective-based Learning
- Daily drill concept
- Intonation with beginners
- Blend with beginners
- Balance with beginners

Year-at-a-Glance for Development of the Ensemble Sound (Years 2 and 3)

- 1st Six Weeks
 - Concepts/Vocabulary Related to Ensemble sound
 - Breathing
 - Singing
 - Parts of the Note
 - Articulation and Releases
 - Level 2 Listening
 - Tuning Basics and Pitch Manipulation
 - Individual Development
 - Establish daily routines for individual instruments
 - All-Region etudes
 - Scales/technique
 - Unison duet/trio (homogeneous)
 - Full Ensemble Development
 - Split as much as possible!
 - Development of “choirs”
 - Daily Drill Exercises
 - 8-Beat air/tone (Concert F)
 - Breathing exercises
 - Block F – air, sing, play
 - Passing 4s
 - Articulation exercise
 - Long tone or flow study
 - Music Selection – WW, Brass, Percussion Ensembles
- 2nd Six Weeks
 - New concepts/vocabulary and added drill
 - 8 Beat air/tone – one octave
 - Level 3 listening
 - F-Grid – rows, color groups, first chairs
 - Octave tuning and balance exercise
 - Expanded articulation exercise w/ style

- Add in from the bottom
 - Add in from the top
 - Individual development
 - More region music and scales
 - Chord tuning in sections
 - Chorale in sections
 - Full ensemble development
 - Continue splits as much as possible
- 3rd Six Weeks
 - New concepts/vocabulary and added drill
 - Music-specific breathing, articulation, balance and color drills
 - Chord tuning exercise – sing and play
 - Chorale development – sing and play
 - Articulation exercise on chords
 - Individual development
 - Chorale quartets, trios, etc. (heterogeneous)
- 4th Six Weeks
 - New concepts/vocabulary and added drill
 - Chorale transcribed in the keys of contest music
 - Chord tuning exercise specific to contest music (keys)
 - Snippets and style exercises specific to contest music
- 5th Six Weeks and Beyond
 - Continue to refine concepts and approach
 - More opportunities for individual development through solo/ensemble and end-of-year auditions
 - Expand fundamental drill to include exposure to atypical band keys