



Beginner Band: The First Six Weeks

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Beginning Band: The First Six Weeks

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Texas Bandmasters Association

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BEFORE DAY ONE

BAND PLACEMENTS

- Supply sheets/letters
 - [STILES](#) & [SHADOW RIDGE](#) - Supplies and instrument due on 1st day of school
 - KRIMMEL - Instruments and supplies due by first day of week two.

EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Summer emails
- Beginner parent meeting
 - [STILES](#) - 1-2 weeks before school starts in conjunction with "Spartan Camp"
 - Check off list due by first Friday
 - [SHADOW RIDGE](#) - 2 weeks into the start of school
 - Check off list due by first Friday
 - [KRIMMEL](#) - check off list due by Friday after Labor Day but since we are starting later, generally the second Friday we are in school.

IN THE BEGINNING...

DAY 1 - RULES AND SITTING

[Stiles sample rules](#)

FIRST WEEK OR TWO

- Lots of theory work
 - KRIMMEL- Everyone together, theory work the entire first week, musical alphabet, note reading, rhythm, review posture, and do breathing exercises.
 - Flash cards of the notes of the staff
 - Percussion learns grand staff
 - "Bandy Feud" note reading games
 - How to open cases without dumping out horn.
 - Open cases middle of second week, talk about the parts of the instrument.

- SHADOW RIDGE - Establish culture and routine through theory learning and activities.
 - Introduce sitting positions and breathing exercises
 - Check individual supplies/instrument
 - Learn parts of instrument (take quiz by end of first week)
 - Musical alphabet games, review staff attributes and note names
- STILES
 - Learn to sit – bodies AND music stands
 - Darcy teaches **rhythm and theory** to all beginners
 - Alex & Jenna check supplies and email parents about missing stuff
 - **Flashcards** - kids make by hand, first octave, must pass in 10ish seconds before they can open their instrument case
 - Study cards individually at beginning of class then races
 - Open cases end of 2nd week, beginning of 3rd
- We all move very S L O W
 - Getting to the book faster doesn't make your kids better
 - THOROUGH wins the race

ONCE WE'RE HOLDING INSTRUMENTS

- When do instruments go home?
when students can demonstrate specific skills and proper care of instrument
- Parts first usually by 3rd week (timing differs by instrument)

Flutes - headjoint only at first, then only body only for a day or two to practice holding

Clarinets - mpc and barrel in case, bodies at school

Double Reeds - *most have started a few weeks before school starting with a private teacher.* Reed only for oboe, bocal and reed for bassoon but

Saxes – Neck & mpc in case, bodies stay at school)

Trumpets - Instrument minus the tuning slide at first. "Lead pipe buzzing"

Horn - mouthpiece first for a **short** while, then entire instrument.

Trombone/Euph - mouthpiece only for a week or until everyone can hold a steady pitch

Tuba - mouthpiece with tubing for a *very short while*, on tuba very soon due to lack of resistance

Percussion - pad and sticks, practice marimba

- Whole instrument by 4th week

GENERAL PACING

KRIMMEL

- Count rhythm, note naming in rhythm, air and fingers
- Articulate with different syllables for different instruments
- First Chair Test is also holding out a specific note on either tiny instrument or full instrument depending on what they play.
- Some I play-You play, depending on the instrument (harmony director)
 - Kids demonstrate as much as possible.
- Printed warm up page
 - Start in the book once we can do this page and articulate
- Chair tests

SHADOW RIDGE

- **Establish environment, routine and culture** through class activities such as musical alphabet, theory games, and rhythm rockers.
- Posture control, then air control, then moving to small part of instrument, finally to full instrument. Layered learning throughout with emphasis on attention to detail.
- Like Stiles: lots of “I play - You play” to handwritten to printed warm-up
 - When everyone can play first two warm-up pages we then add book as a supplement. Toward the end of the first 6 weeks.
- Lots of playing down the line or “passing the note” from person to person.
- Lots of “I’m the student, you’re the teacher. What am I doing wrong?”
- Articulation: most instruments start with a “tU” syllable, some on “tah”
- No formal chair tests, no assigned seating.
 - Individual evaluations occur daily through playing down the line and individual “Echoing” between students and me.

STILES

- Lots of **integrated transfer of knowledge**
 - Moving from counting to “Tah”ing to air play to sound to note names to positions...
 - **Count It -> Tah It -> Note Name It -> Position It -> Finger It -> Air Play It -> Play It**
 - I play/sing/count/air play/etc - You answer
- First chair test = a whole note on a specific pitch on tiny instrument or full instrument (depending on instrument)
 - We chair test every week from our earliest skill
- Once majority of kids are getting a steady *something*, we add a skill (partial changes, articulation, depending on instrument)
- Teach students to identify problems and solutions
- I play-You play warm up to handwritten warm up to printed warm up
- When everyone can play the warm up page, we can start in the book
- [EXAMPLE CLASS PERIOD](#)

INSTRUMENT PEDAGOGY

FLUTE

- MIRRORS!!!
- *First instrument part to go home* so they can find their lip placement through experimenting
- Start on headjoint
 - Describe placement - picture that I draw
 - Open headjoint at first
 - Then high and low notes on closed headjoint
 - Send only headjoint home in case. Teacher keeps labeled bodies and foot at school
- Without headjoint, learn hand position and fingerings
 - Fingering chant
 - Tape or moleskin where hands go
 - Flute Olympics- hold the flute in the correct playing position for two minutes. If flutes start dipping downward, time starts over.
- Articulation
 - STILES – experimented with poo on fake flute and tongued immediately on headjoint
 - KRIMMEL - Adds articulation as soon as the students are ready because they will use a “poo” syllable forever until you make them articulate.
- Advance to highs and lows on full body
 - STILES
 - Graduate to *sitting* like a flute
 - Highs and lows on Bb, A, G, F ([EXAMPLE WARM UP](#))
 - Advance to working down diatonically from high Bb to low Bb
 - Moves to book once class can play Big Kid Warm Up
 - KRIMMEL
 - Octaves low to high octaves
 - Third space B, A, G, F, E, D going down
 - Then does chromatic notes from low D to C, two ledger lines above the staff.

OBOE/BASSOON

- STILES – Lessons starting in summer required
- KRIMMEL - most all of our kids have lessons
 - Oboes without lessons - on the reed, proper embouchure, crow the reed then entire instrument pretty quickly.
 - Bassoons without lessons will start on bocal and reed and then to entire instrument.

CLARINET

- No playing until they can put on their reed by themselves
 - I will tell them what to fix but won't do it for them
 - LIGATURE GOES ON FIRST!!!
- Barrel and mouthpiece only
 - MIRRORS!!!!
 - How do we describe embouchure
 - STILES - whistle face, corners in, click on top teeth, seal *AROUND*
 - KRIMMEL- pretend you are drinking a thick shake through a straw, then take air in and air out keeping the same face, top teeth on top of the mouthpiece (use mouthpiece patches for comfort), corners in against the mouthpiece.
 - Work with a tuner
 - Down the Row game
 - Whole note F# on tuner is their first chair test
 - Explain to kids what causes a G or an F
 - F – low tongue, aiming air down, not pushing up
 - G - biting
 - *Make them articulate what causes those and identify which of those problems they are exhibiting*
 - They write all of this stuff down
 - KRIMMEL - lot of I play you play, and if student makes an incorrect sound, the students are asked to diagnose what the problem is so they will know how to fix at home.
 - STILES
 - Adds upper joint when class is all on F# and can articulate
 - Works on E, D, C, F, G (in that order)
 - Lots of left hand position work
 - First finger must touch A key & G# key
 - Pinky must touch C# pinky
 - Still holding the barrel with right hand
 - Add lower joint when the class is ready - differs every year (**tone**)
 - Tell-Tale Tone Notes on U.J.
 - E – tongue too low
 - C – air aimed down
 - *Waited too late this year*
 - Start in book when can play Big Kid Warm Up
 - KRIMMEL
 - On upper joint teaches notes G, F, E, D, C
 - Earn lower joint when they can successfully play G, F, E, D, C in quarter notes @ 78 bpm with characteristic sound, proper embouchure, good hand position and tapping their toe.
 - Earn bell when they can play open G down to low F.

SAXOPHONE

- Similar to clarinet with more relaxed embouchure
- G# on tuner with neck and mouthpiece
- Fingering chant
- Graduate to sitting like a saxophone
- Start on B

TRUMPET

- SHADOW RIDGE & STILES
 - Air on hand first → Mpc air → Mpc vibration
 - On leadpipe only (remove tuning slide)
 - Helps set tone and air flow
 - Send home with tuning slide left at school
 - E or F
 - Diatonic work early on then add chromatic
 - Use 1st valve slide for E and 3rd valve slide for D from the beginning.
- KRIMMEL
 - Tell students to say “pizza” to activate the aperture in the center (taken from Lynn Jackson).
 - Air through coffee stirrer
 - Air on hand with coffee stirrer straw
 - Air on hand removing coffee stirrer
 - Mouthpiece- air only
 - On instrument without tuning slide
 - Students don't take horns home until they can place their mouthpiece correctly, with good hand position, and holding a steady sound for four counts. This is their first chair test as well.

HORN

- KRIMMEL
 - Tell students to say “pizza” to activate the aperture in the center (taken from Lynn Jackson)
- SHADOW RIDGE
 - All brass initially the same introduction to breathing, air on hand, air/mpc (see trumpet)
 - Horn:
 - Mpc, air to vibration
 - On horn, air to sound. C-E-G, any note is fine as long as it sounds beautiful.
 - Develop one-way sirens on mpc before demanding control between C-E-G on horn.
 - Right hand holding bell on the leg.
- STILES
 - No hand in bell initially, graduate to hand in bell
 - Start on G-E-C, then add F and D
 - Use the trumpet book
 - HORNS ARE NOT SPECIAL SNOWFLAKES

TROMBONE

- STILES
 - Air play without mpc first
 - You can already hear problems and see weird things with their lips
 - Air to roll up onto lips
 - Keeps them from doing something weird once the mpc touches their face
 - Air through mpc
 - Start on F then low Bb
 - Partial changes with air direction and dropping jaw, I NEVER talk about the aperture changing even if its true....
 - First chair test is whole note on F
 - As soon as everyone can do a whole note on whatever pitch we add partial changes using “middle and low”
 - Lots of singing with “middle low” “F-Bb” “First-First” “Tah-Toh”
 - Add high partial fairly early
 - Tongued “lip slurs” using 1-4th
 - Slide position location
 - Describe then pop back and forth
 - Sliding chants, always required to pop, should never see the movement between positions
 - Start in book when class can play [Big Kid Warm Up](#)
- SHADOW RIDGE
 - Lots of glissing
 - Air does not change and bell does not budge as slide moves
 - Slide position location
 - Describe 1 thru 6, but spend the majority of first few weeks mastering 1,3,4,6. 1&3 become pillars to find 2; 4&6 become pillars to find 5.
 - Initially speed between positions not as important as accuracy, maintaining good hand position, and avoiding tension.

EUPHONIUM

- STILES - mixed with trombone class initially
- SHADOW RIDGE - Euphonium & Tuba class combined and all start on euphonium mouthpieces for first 6 weeks.
 - Same initial steps to developing sound as trombone & horn.
 - Playing position: use of towels for taller students.

TUBA

- STILES - alone for a while because of octave placement
- SHADOW RIDGE - Euphonium & Tuba class combined and all start on euphonium mouthpieces for first 6 weeks.
 - Same initial steps to developing sound as trombone & horn.
 - Playing position: use of cabinet liner to aid in holding “baby” tuba in place better on student’s lap.

PERCUSSION

KRIMMEL

- Rhythm and theory just like all of the other classes
- Teach the grand staff
- Start with developing the correct hand position, making sure we talk about the lever system. Lever One is arm, Lever two is wrist, and lever three is fingers.
 - Sixteen on a hand forever
 - hand position
 - rebound
 - playing in the same zone on the pad
 - stick height
 - 9, 6, 3, and 1 inches.
 - Eight on a hand then add a measure of sixteenth notes
 - start with the right on the pad, and fill in the left hand by playing on their left leg on second and fourth sixteenth notes. This way they can see the right never changes. Then have them put both hands on the pad. Then do left hand lead to try to strengthen their left hands.
- Mix in keyboard instruments
 - Do right hand three exercises
 - Do left hand three exercises
 - Keep stands low so they can see the music and keyboard with their peripheral vision.
 - *Do not let them memorize, make them read!!*

STILES

- Percussion camp in August leading into lessons
 - Flashcards, counting, etc
- Start initially on pad for rebound purposes
- Pad Days/Mallet Days from the very beginning
- Percussion follows the exact same steps as wind players
 - MUST note name while they play
 - MUST count the same way
 - They ARE part of the same band...

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