



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 26-28, 2018**

**Heterogeneous Beginning Band**

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**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

## **“Heterogeneous Beginning Band”**

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### **The Instrument Selection Process**

- Consider hosting the event at elementary feeder schools in May for parent convenience.
- Host another instrument selection day(s) before school starts in the fall for late decisions.
- Partner with local music stores and give them a selection of instrument brands and models you prefer. This will prevent any store-brand or no-name mouthpieces being rented.
- Complete a form for each child and rate their ability to produce a quality tone.
- If possible, ask the high school director(s) to help you with placements due to the volume of students. It is as much in their interest as yours to place students appropriately.
- If you must select instruments when school starts, ask other teachers to help. I recommend putting them at the brass table so you can focus on woodwinds/reeds.
- Get and use plastic reeds for clarinet and saxophone to save on cost. Some music stores will give you one to use for free for such purposes.

### **Making Recommendations**

**Flute:** Even top and bottom lips, no overbite on the top. Play on head joint only and cover end with hand. “Two” vs. “huh.” If they are successful, remove the hand from the end.

**Oboe and Bassoon:** Steady airflow against reed resistance. Slightly puckered and inverted lips.

**Clarinet:** Firm corners, cover the bottom teeth and bite down on the top. Watch for puffed cheeks and puffed corners of the lips.

**Saxophone:** “Voo.” Again, look for puffed cheeks and avoid biting on the reed. See if the student can sustain steady air for a few seconds. It has a larger bore than clarinet.

**Trumpet:** Firm corners. Recommend C-G-C (0) to test for flexibility.

**French Horn:** Firm Corners. Recommend C-G-C (0) to test for flexibility. Check 2/3 – 1/3 rule.

**Trombone/Euphonium:** Firm Corners. Recommend Bb up to F for flexibility. If a student struggles to play a Bb up to F, try them on tuba. Look for puffed cheeks.

**Tuba:** Less firm embouchure than trombone/euphonium. Attempt a Bb down to low F for range.

**Percussion:** Steady beat with a song on snare pads. Matching rhythms by rote. On mallets, first 5 notes of a C major scale ascending and descending.

- Be picky during the selection process. In a mixed instrumentation setting you will have less time to help students struggling with the basics of producing a tone/embouchure formation.
- Many programs only start students on Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, and Percussion.
  - Consider this route carefully. You will have to switch instruments, teach new notes, fingerings, and clefs at some point.
- Give a sheet with the final instrument choice to the parent before they leave for the night, along with information about local music stores.
  - Keep a copy of the students audition sheet with the final choice marked. You may need to reference it at a later date.
  - Be clear on school owned vs. family rented instruments. Consider a lottery.

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### The First Days

#### Procedures

- How do you want students to enter the room?
- How do you want chairs and stands set up?
- Where do they keep backpacks?
- Do you assign lockers?
- What do students do when they enter the room (tasks)?
- Go over your Band Handbook.
  - Review any papers that students are expected to sign and return.
- Consider charging a “Band Fee” and “Instrument Use Fee”
  - Check with Administration (district and school)
  - This can help cover bus costs and repair budget
- **Have a plan. Demonstrate everything exactly as you want it.**

#### Setting Up Instruments for the First Time

- This generally takes me two class periods but depends on your class length.
- I bring one volunteer to the front and we demo how to properly assemble the instrument.
  - When a clarinet student demos, only clarinets are allowed to assemble.
  - Involve all students in the process.
- Check every instrument every day.
  - Check every ligature, make sure tenons are greased, and instruments are swabbed.
    - This will prevent bad habits and ensure that the assembly of the instrument is not the source of improper tone.
- Show students how to correctly put away instruments both in cases and lockers.
- Teach each instrument a “rest” position. This is a lifesaver when teaching other sections!

#### Activities

##### Posture

- Edge of seat, feet flat on the floor, back straight

**Breathing** - with metronome if possible. If not, have able students snap fingers in time.

- In 4, out 4      In 4, out 8
- In 2, out 4      In 2, out 8

##### Steady Beat Exercises

- Start standing and pulse up and down on heels.
- Turn from side to side. Add arms.
- Sit without breaking rhythm and put macrobeats in feet.
- Add microbeats in hands. Maintain posture!
- Recommend steady beat exercises every day.

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**Rote vs. Note – the Music Learning Theory Advantage**

**One Note at a Time – Concert Bb** (including percussion)

- Teach each instrument how to name and finger a Concert Bb.
- Have students hum or sing the note on “do.”
- Using a metronome if possible, sustain the note for 4 beats and have students echo.
  - This is the beginning of a long tone development.
  - Adjust embouchure and hand position as necessary.

**Separated Style**

- “Toot” – 8 times in duple. The first time, say “toot” and have students echo.
  - The second time, play the note on concert Bb
  - Listen to one instrument group at a time.

**Connected Style**

- “Doo” - 8 times in duple. The first time, say “doo” and have students echo.

**Pass Out and Have Students Maintain a Personal Fingering Chart**

- This helps them understand the layout of their instrument (especially woodwinds!)
- Students can reference it before/during/after class if they forget a fingering.
- **MusicSpiritSolutions.com** - magnetic fingering charts – a lifesaver!
  - Have every instrument on the board when the students enter.
  - At the top of the board, write “Concert \_\_\_”
  - Fill in the fingering and write the note name for each instrument under its magnet.
    - Students copy on their fingering chart as you go.

**Repeat the Connected and Separated Process with Concert A**

- Echo patterns between Bb and A.
- Teach concert C. Echo patterns between C and Bb. Teach patterns between D and C.

**Sometime During These Classes Start Teaching Students How to Sing the following...**

Once they can sing the song, teach on instruments by rote using the whole-part-whole approach.

**3 Note Songs**

Hot Cross Buns, Mary had a Little Lamb, Little Tom Tinker (triple)

**4 Note Songs**

Major Duple, Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Claire de Lune

- **Teach a Harmony** part to accompany the melody (**Bb and A**).
- Repeat the Connected and Separated Process with **Concert F and teach bass line**.

**5 Note Songs**

Lightly Row, Patsy Ory Ory Aye, Oats Peas Beans

**6-7 Note Songs**

London Bridge, Twinkle, Down by the Station, Baa Baa Black Sheep,  
Jingle Bells, I Have a Little Driedel (great for the holidays!)

## **Teaching Notation Through Music Learning Theory**

### **Sound Before Sight**

- Students should be very familiar with a song/rhythm before they see it.
- Follows the pattern of language development in children.
- Same rules apply to melodies as rhythm.

### **Teach students vocally**

- Students echo tonal patterns by voice.
  - When familiar, student echo tonal patterns by voice, then by instrument.
- Students echo rhythm patterns by voice.
  - Maintain macrobeats in feet and microbeats in hands.
- When familiar, open to Red Book p.10 or p.11
  - Students place finger on pattern and echo teacher.
  - Connection made between sound and sight.
- Pattern group instead of individual notes.
  - Mostly all lines or all spaces (tonic and dominant)
- Effective when teaching students of transposing instruments how to read together.

### **Testing Reading Ability**

- Sing a pattern and ask students to identify the number.
- Perform out of order.
- Perform combinations of patterns.
- Write a pattern on the board for each transposing instrument group.
- Play a pattern on your instrument and ask students to aurally determine pattern.

### **First Notated Song**

- “Major Duple” – melody, harmony, bass line
  - First song they read is familiar to them.
- Select different numbers to practice.
  - Let students decide (advanced students can challenge themselves)

### **Use in Conjunction with Green Book**

- Green Book is all repertoire
  - Mary had a Little Lamb, Little Tom Tinker, Holiday music

### **Advancements**

- Accompaniment CD
- P. 19 Introduces Concert Eb (teach concert Ab note)
- P. 22 Introduces Concert C minor (relative key to Eb, teach concert B natural note)
- P. 25 Introduces Divisions in Duple
- P. 26 Introduces Concert F Major (teach concert E natural note)
- P. 32 Introduces Divisions in Triple
- P. 36 Introduces Elongations

## **General Tips for Running a Program Alone and Retaining Students**

### **Inventory**

- Complete a full inventory *by serial number* as soon as possible.
  - Make sure instruments with joints have matching serial numbers.
  - Label cases with serial numbers if currently unlabeled.
- Account for all instruments.
  - Every job I have ever started began with instruments missing from the inventory.
- Order supplies such as reeds, slide grease, cork grease, and any school-provided items early.
- Test all instruments for potential repair work.
- Establish a “pick up” day with a local repair shop(s) to get and drop off instruments.
- Make forms for loaning out school-owned instruments.

### **Finances**

- Keep copies of every receipt.
- Create and maintain your own spreadsheet in addition to those you submit.
- Expect whoever handles finances to lose your paperwork. Always have backups!
- Expect whoever handles finances to work slowly. Make requests well ahead of time.
- Follow all district/school policies closely regarding spending, limits, and approved vendors.
- Be aware of how and what any Boosters are spending money on. If an Administrator wants to know about the Boosters, be prepared to answer.

### **Performances**

- Register for Contest, Solo and Ensemble, Region/District on time. Research all deadlines!
  - Arrange for parent volunteers for each class performing at concerts.
    - You can only be with one group at a time.
    - Have a seating chart for each group. Host a pre-concert meeting for volunteers.
- Have a clean up crew of parents/volunteers ready to tear down after the concert.
- If you lack parent support, ask fellow teachers to oversee and help.
  - Explain concert procedures to students the entire week leading up to the concert.
    - Where do you want them to sit/stand? Are they allowed to talk? Play?
    - Do students have to stay after school or can they show up before the concert?
  - Have your concert program completely done more than a week ahead of the concert.
    - Send it to an administrator for approval and adhere to campus formatting/fonts/colors.
    - Pass the program to each class and have students correct spelling mistakes.

### **Recruiting**

Students stay in Band for many reasons, including the structure, high expectations, and friendships they build along the way. You become their mentor and provide a welcoming and creative environment. I cannot stress enough the importance of being consistent and knowledgeable in the subject matter. Provide opportunities for students who struggle to get extra help and those who are advanced to move ahead. Be friendly without being their friend. Hold them to a high standard. Host weekly sectionals where students can get that small-group instruction they need. Go to their basketball games and comment on their new haircut. It's the combination of infinite small events that have led to my growing a program from 35 students to 160 in four years. You can do it too! Best of luck in all that you do.

