



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**How to Plan and Structure Your
Sectionals**

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HOW TO PLAN AND STRUCTURE SECTION REHEARSALS

PLANNING THE SECTION REHEARSAL

- Why have a section rehearsal?
- Who would be in them?
- What work on to achieve the goal?
- Where in the yearly calendar would they be scheduled?
- When would they be scheduled during the week?

All questions that need to be asked to have efficient sectionals that students will feel like they are worth attending.

Why?

- Look at your school year...what is your organization doing?
- Do you have a goal where you want your program to be at the end of the year?
- Do you want to play a certain piece of music in the spring? What does your band need to get stronger at to accomplish that? Can that be taught weekly during the fall semester?
- What are your band's strengths and weaknesses that could be addressed weekly in sectionals?
- From that information, formulate a plan to get your band to the level where they can do what you envision for them.
- Be it methodical in your plan. Start small and gradually add on week by week, month by month.
- In other words, create short term and long-term goals for your students.

Who?

- Based on the amount of time you have each week.
- How long they are and frequency depends on your needs.
- You can start one way and change them based on your student's needs.

What?

- What curriculum will you use to accomplish your goals for the band?

Where?

- With multiple bands, room assignments must be decided on.

When?

- Look at your rehearsal schedule to see how you could fit them in the week.

Let's look at the overall school year and the section rehearsal needs that might arise.

SUMMER BAND (Marching Band/JH Band)

Improve individuals

Ensemble fundamentals and performance music

Introduce Region music

FALL

Improve individuals

Teach region music

Concert music fundamentals needed for the spring

Winter Concert music

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Area audition students

SPRING

Improve individuals
Chamber Groups
Individual Solo help
UIL music preparation

HOW TO SET UP YOUR SECTION REHEARSALS

SUMMER BAND

By instrument

- Work on region etudes
- Devote time to individual improvement

By voice groupings on marching or concert music

FALL

Like instrument sectionals on individual improvement and region music.

- They can be during class. One day pull out woodwind's, next day brass, 15,15,15,
- Outside of the school day depending on your schedule

Individual listening's on region music with students during or outside the day

Sectionals on winter concert music after marching season if there is time.

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Work with those going to Area auditions.

CONCERT SEASON

Options:

- For ensemble contest, you could create like instrument ensembles so they can be a section rehearsal of their own after ensemble contest is over and their weekly time remains the same.
- Create a schedule of your small ensembles and then do a full woodwind and full brass sectional during the same week so you can work on UIL music at the same time.

UIL Concert Music.

- Create groupings for these sectionals based on the music you have chosen to perform.
 - Like instruments
 - Upper woodwinds, high brass, low brass, low reeds,
 - Like melody instruments, Like bass line instruments
 - Technique groups
 - Small chamber groups out of the music that are very exposed
 - Sections that need extra help
 - How these are organized is infinite based on your needs and situation.
- These groupings can change as the music is prepared.
 - Start out in groupings to teach specific parts of the music
 - Over time, combine groups for other needs
 - Over time, change groupings based on where you are in learning the music
- Organization
 - Start with a plan, what teach first, then next, etc.
 - Write out the plan for each sectional
 - Keep a journal of what accomplished and what work on moving forward
 - Start with a tempo chart that covers the semester and hand out to students

HOW TO STRUCTURE THE SECTION REHEARSAL

- This depends on the time of year and what you are working towards.
- Plan the year then plan the sectionals.

- Make detailed plans and be sure you decide ahead of time how many minutes will be spent on each item.
- Keep track of what is accomplished and what is not in a journal or on a calendar to track progress of your goals.
- This progress can be on individuals and/or the music.

A typical sectional might look like this:

Begin with fundamentals. (Address Tone, Technique, Tuning)

- Ensemble drill (includes how to play individually and as an ensemble)
 - Instrument specific exercises (address how to play even and fundamentally)
 - The idea is to establish a mental attitude conducive to a purposeful and productive rehearsal
 - It is most important that this is not done on auto pilot, give goals to think about and accomplish for each exercise then ask students what they heard, what they thought about the performance of the exercise. Engage the students.
 - Assign fundamentals to be practiced out of rehearsal and brought back improved next time you meet.
2. Work on the main goal(s) for the sectional.
 - A technique needed to perform the marching music or region music or concert music
 - A section of the music that can't be worked on in class
 - Teach a section of the music that needs to be learned outside of class first
 3. Reinforce prior learning
 - Reinforce a section of the music that needs repetition on a regular basis
 - Hear assignments
 4. Give directions for the next section rehearsal
 - What is assigned
 - Look at this for next time
 - Continue to review this

Fundamentals and Basics – 10-30 Minutes (It is important this is not done on auto pilot by teacher and/or student)

- Breathing
 - Work on timing
 - Work on posture
 - Work on breathing
 - Controlling air
 - Being able to take air in and out the same way
 - Can even work on follow-through and direction of line
- Prepare the embouchure
- Bring the instrument to the correct temperature for correct playing response
- To establish a mental attitude conducive to a purposeful and productive rehearsal
- Helps with ear-training
- Awareness/Development – listening skill
- Articulation – matching type and strength
- Tone Quality – resonant, vibrant, full of harmonics
- Matching – others/pitch/tonal energy
- Fitting chord structure – hearing intervals/chords balance
- Transfer the concepts from the ensemble skill development portion to the performance literature

Global thought about section rehearsals for overall school year.

- Start with big goal then break into small goals with a time plan to achieve them.

- Plan for learning UIL music over a 3-4 month period. Set tempo goals on a calendar and hand out to students.
- In the fall sectionals, daily drill can be tailored to work on the fundamental skills need for the music to be played in the spring.
- Learn difficult sections in sectionals before playing in band.
- Learn/rehearse sparse sections in sectionals before playing in band.
- Don't sight read what you are going to learn. Teach it slow and correctly from the beginning, otherwise too many problems occur and what they hear when sight-reading is what they remember the piece sounds like to them.
- From the beginning when learning new music, take out ties, note name and finger, subdivide, count out loud.
- Work on technical and/or tonal problems not existing throughout the band but in this group of instruments.
- Before working on a piece, divide the piece into sections, then rank the sections by how hard they are then work on the hardest the most, etc.
- Cover hard spots twice as much until week before the performance.
- Sight reading practice for UIL – if appropriate and have time. (This depends on your situation)
- Assessment, tests, pass offs, should be strategically planned to hear the music mastered. I like to hear these in in sectionals in person to create a higher level of accountability.
- Playing individually in front of others helps to develop independent soloists
- If you are playing something with solos or duets, try to get them together outside of sectionals
- If need be, find different sections (i.e. Low Brass and Flutes) and make them come at a separate time to work on a section of the music.
- Scheduling possibilities - before, after, or during school – during school depends upon study halls and cooperative teachers
 - Be aware of lunch and advisory periods

The Final Thoughts

- Have fun!
- Do energetic teaching to motivate them!
- Treat the 2nd and 3rd bands like the first band and you will see a difference.
- Use the top programs in the state as a model but realize that every situation is unique and ask yourself what do *you* want *your* students to be able to do.
- Your kids are only limited by your expectations of them. Don't you think they will rise to the occasion? Give them that chance. Do whatever it takes to get your band to the highest level possible. Students can play well if they are expected to. Students can learn music above their heads if expected to. Students can be motivated to work hard if done in a positive, encouraging manner.
- Plan and be organized. Don't have sectionals just to be able to say you did. Plan, organize, and keep the students accountable and you'll have success.

REMEMBER: The stronger the individual, the stronger the band will be. On top of that, what ensemble skills will you cover as well.

If you have any questions, email Greg Dick: gdick@fisd12.net