



**Texas Bandmasters Association
Virtual Convention July 20-22, 2020**

**Bridging the Gap:
Remediation for 7th Graders with an
Incomplete Beginner Year**

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Bridging the GAP:

Remediation for 7th Graders with an Incomplete Beginner Year

“Stress is caused by being here but wanting to be there.” – Eckhart Tolle

“The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but thoughts about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral. It is as it is.” — Eckhart Tolle

But <insert competition here>?!

We are all in the same educational dystopia, no one is going to come out the winner.



Where are we?

What did my kids miss?

- Complex Rhythms
- Range building
- Tuning skills
- Musical Phrasing
- Legato (only top split of trombones)
- Articulation exercises
- Two octave scales
- Cut time and 6/8 playing
- Intro to minor keys
- Copies of full band fundamentals
- Crash course on Land of 1000 Dances and Fight Song



Make a list to track concepts achieved.

Talk to your 8th graders before school starts.

Explain. Assign. Empower.

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

- Zoom meeting with your bands to go over procedures and new expectations.
- Send home unlisted or hidden YouTube video with same information.
- Take care of all paperwork online.
- Are there new supplies you want them to purchase as soon as possible?
 - USB microphone? Books? Smart Music subscription?
- *Who knows how long we have at school before another shut down happens? Don't waste time!*

ONCE SCHOOL STARTS

(Assumes in-person or hybrid scheduling. If we do online learning, I would work to keep a similar model for distance learning, including splits between directors within a "period".)

Split as much as you can.

- Social distancing may require this anyhow, but this is the year for small group work as much as possible.
- Split every day, use every director, every period. (at least for a while)
 - EXPECT TO WORK HARDER THIS YEAR.
 - Trumpets, Horns, Low Brass, Percussion
 - Flutes/Oboes, Clarinets, Saxes/Low Reeds
 - 7th Graders, 8th Graders if or when that makes sense
 - Rotate to see all of your kids
- Plan for every split of your own ensemble.
- Splitting by section allows for instrument specific fundamentals which will desperately be needed, especially in lower ensembles.

Assume they don't. Assume they can't.

Allow yourself a pleasant surprise for the first time since March 12th. ☺

Start with full band warm ups – everyone plays at same time.

- Not just start each class – start your *curriculum*
- Avoid isolating 7th graders initially
 - It's been nearly 6 months since they have played with other students.
 - Build confidence!
- If in a mixed setting (ww & brass), all woodwinds vs. all brass
- No drone initially – remind them what instruments sound like
- Remington's are a great place to start.
 - Easy for everyone
 - A billion variations of 1a that can intro new concepts (ie. Articulation, subdivision, tuning, etc...)

Comparative warm ups once fundamentals are comfortable

(Comfortable = correct notes, understanding warm up format)

- Move to 8th versus 7th
- Tone model vs. everyone else
 - Rotate tone models. Don't always choose the best kid. Don't always choose an 8th grader.
- Assign partners, preferably 8th grade with 7th grade.
 - Allow 8th grader to offer their partner feedback.

Play with seating arrangements - No concert means no setup expectation.

- Help partners hear.
- Rotate to help you hear.
- Changes student behavior and accountability
- Use name tags.

Count every day. Play rhythms on Concert F every day (song or rhythm chart).

BEYOND FUNDAMENTALS

Consider treating your ensemble like an instrumental class. **UNISON WORK.**
Every kid will grow individually, especially in lower bands.

Re-establish the steps of learning new music for everyone.
EVERYONE is out of practice.

Method Books

- Essential Elements Book 2 & 3
- Essential Musicianship series
- Rubank Books or the like
- Unison Etudes played as a class
- Foundations for Superior Performance



*I anticipate kids
(even 8th graders)
enjoying unison
work. No one loves
background parts.*

District Band

Change your expectations.

Retain your sanity.

Keep your kids loving band.

- How many of us require District for our top band?
- How many of you are excited about teaching Region etudes if we see our kids 50% of the time or switch to 100% online?
- How many of your 7th graders get stressed over Region etudes on a normal year?

Ensemble skills - Blend, Balance, Tuning, Group Dynamics, etc...

All can be addressed in your fundamental block. Apply to music later.

- While split, lots of listening within section/split balancing person to person
- What we think of as "full band concepts" are actually just good musician concepts and can be taught and achieved in ensembles of all size of any instrumentation.

Ensemble repertoire

- Start small – full band pieces in Book 2 and 3
- Trios, Quartets by Instrument, Finale for whatever your group is
- Canadian Brass Quintet Books
- Woodwind choir music (individual instrument ensembles)
- Excellence in Chamber Music series, other Flex Ensemble music
- Flex band pieces
- Sight reading pieces

Should I do a full band piece that we piece together?

Depends on how you want to use your time.

- Later in the semester?
- Until the gap between my 7th graders and 8th graders is not painfully wide, we will not be focusing on full band music.
- Maybe with top band?

If I don't, how will we be ready for UIL?

Are you asking this from the place of how will you prepare the level of music you play on a normal year for UIL?

- If this your concern, WHY? Choose music based on where your band is by the end of the first semester, and if their ensemble skills (not individual skills necessarily) are not ready for your typical program, program something easier.

OR

How will I prepare any full band piece?

- Every second of attention you give your individual players, every fundamental you address in your fundamental block will translate to full band music.

What if we are online this semester?

Then none of us should be going to UIL in the spring.



FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYER.
MAKE EVERY DECISION BASED ON WHERE YOUR STUDENTS ARE IN THAT MOMENT, not where your band typically is.

“Accept - then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it.” – Eckhart Tolle