



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 21-23, 2022**

**Recruitment, Retention, Results:  
Teaching Clarinet at a Title One School**

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**DEMO GROUP: PSJA Early College HS  
Clarinet Choir**



# Recruitment, Retention, Results:

## Teaching Clarinet in a Title One School

*Jennifer Garza and the PSJA Early College High School Clarinet Choir*

Texas Bandmasters Association Clinic-July 23, 2022

### Recruitment: Middle School

- Model the clarinet well!
  - Either staff or student whose primary instrument is clarinet.
  - Most kids only know Squidward (bad example)
  - Play something relevant and have them guess the song. Provides good engagement.
- Make sure they have the right features.
  - Make bear claws to check for double jointed, especially the thumbs.
  - SMILE! 😊 no underbites allowed. The angle of the clarinet won't work well.
- If you have them test, make it EASY!
  - Thin reed-Rico 2.5 is the easiest at the beginning and cheap.
  - Fobes mouthpiece or Yamaha 4C

### Recruitment: High School

- Get to know your middle school kids!
  - Involve them in everything you can- concerts, events, football games, etc. Every time you visit, talk about high school in some sort of capacity.
- Make events that are special to them and have the high school kids work on that event and put it together.
  - Example: Woodwind Fiesta, Band Olympics
  - Make events that are just fun and have nothing to do with band.
- Take your high school students to the middle schools to talk to them
  - Have an HONEST conversation about band.
  - Let your high school kids do the talking in a question/answer form.

### Retention: Middle School

- Give small goals at the beginning.
  - Take your time and be super patient. It is not saxophone! Sometimes it takes forever for them to make a sound or for them to learn how to put the instrument together.
  - Progress is small, but once they figure it out, they will never forget it.

- Do everything you can to get them to rent or buy an instrument.
  - Jupiter clarinet is fine for beginners. Yamaha is next, then a buffet E11.
  - Clark Fobes mouthpiece or Yamaha 4C-for beginners and is cost effective.
    - Yamaha 4c-\$36, Clark Fobes Debut-\$30
    - If they make even a small investment, they will tough it out longer, especially at the beginning.
- In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Clarinet success and goals may be different than the band (Bb scale requires clarinets to go over the break, one of the hardest skills!)
  - Push All Region! Individual success and growth is essential to retention.
  - The more time they get to have in the band hall, the better. Make it their home! (80% practice after school, 20% fun)

### Retention: High School

- When you're off the podium, be a human. It's okay for the students to see your personality and know that you have normal things you enjoy too.
- Provide opportunities for seeing others in their craft!
  - Invite your students to concerts and go together as a group
  - College ensembles, local groups, and professors are great, cost-free concerts.
- Meet them at their level and grow from there.
  - Some of your students will be there to be the social butterflies. Some will be on the All-State track. Some students will push themselves and some need a little encouragement. Meet their personal needs, even in the simple things (food, venting, emotional support, a place to chill). Sometimes, they need to know they are more than just a musician and a career move to you.
- If they have an interest at something above their level, help them get there!
  - Don't let them sell themselves short. If they want to play a particular solo or try out for something you think they may struggle with, let them try it and help them with whatever they need.
- Give them a home.
  - My office is not decorated to my style. The kids did it. It's their space and I just rent out a desk.
- Show some grace
  - Our students deal with lots of issues that some kids don't ever experience. ( Family issues, lack of basic necessities, paying for college, etc.)
  - Give your students enough respect that they can come up to you and be honest that they may not be having the best day, week etc.
  - For freshmen: high school marching music is HARD at this level. Be patient and let the upperclassmen take the brunt of the work for a bit until they catch up.
  - The freshmen will not blend right away! They will start to sound like their neighbors after summer band. BIG growth happens in the spring semester.
- Celebrate the small accomplishments! Especially when they struggle!

- College acceptances, graduation achievements, accomplishments in other organizations, attending events outside of band.

### Results: Middle School

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Jupiter, Yamaha, or E11. Fobes or Yamaha 4C. 2.5 reeds-Rico until they have a good sense of reed care. After they figure it out, 2.5 Vandoren Traditional Box.
  - Play musical chairs-establishes friendly individual competition and consistency. Better than traditional chair tests!
  - Tone-primary, tongue-secondary
  - Show them lots of good playing examples
  - Logical approach to the break (For Clarinet Only book is a great resource!)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - Lock in “over the break” as early as possible, including the note recognition that goes with it.
  - Tone in upper register (see Register Slurs worksheet)
  - Articulations-staccato
    - Shorten the air, don’t change the tongue
    - The lower the note, the shorter the air. The higher the note, the longer the air.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Everyone does region. Not every student will make the tryout, but it will make everyone a better player.
  - Advanced clarinet warmups every time you meet with the clarinets.
    - Long tones in upper register with dynamics (24 Count Warmup), faster tonguing patterns in the low/mid-range (Tonguing One and Two)
  - Class three solo or higher with piano accompaniment.

### Results: High School

- Every time you have clarinet alone, do clarinet specific warmups. Band warmups do not always hit tone in a range that needs to be developed.
- Mouthpiece and reed setups will be different for every student
  - Mix of Vandoren reed types and strengths (We use Traditional mostly, but some use V12, Black Box 52s, V21s in 3 or 3.5 strength.)
  - Mouthpieces are mixed. Backun vocalise, vandoren 5RV, 5RV Lyre, M13. Use whatever works best for each student, especially as they advance musically. They will transition the more they practice usually!
  - Push hard for region during summer band
    - Start as a big group all together and go the speed of the middle student.
    - As they advance, split off the advanced group.
    - Even if they fall off or don’t always finish the process, they get better musically and see the other students advance and have an example.

# Common Clarinet Fixes

## Cheat Sheet

1. *What if the tone is airy, unfocused, or there is bad tuning?*
  - a. Long tones on high notes, airy- reed too hard or mouthpiece too closed, unfocused- flat chin, tongue position not in “heeee” position, reed too thin or mouthpiece too open/curved.
  
2. *Are there special fingerings for throat tones to make them more resonant or better in tune?*
  - a. See the worksheet “Resonance Fingerings”. When all else fails, put the entire right hand down.
  
3. *Is there any routine maintenance that needs to be done on clarinet?*
  - a. Clean the inside of the mouthpiece frequently, cork grease often (one cork grease per year per student), oil the bore once a month. Most repair problems come from putting it together and take it apart. Take special attention to this detail daily to prevent repairs!! Reed changes every three weeks at least.
  
4. *What’s a good quality horn that’s also affordable?*
  - a. Middle School: Jupiter, Yamaha, Buffet E11. Buffet R13 for top band/varsity band clarinets.
  - b. High School: Buffet E11, Yamaha (especially for marching), Buffet R13, Backun Q Series (This one is upper level...bore is bigger and requires super-fast air!)
  
5. *Where can I find an example of a good clarinet sound?*
  - a. Corrado Giuffredi, Martin Frost, Stanley Drucker
  
6. *Why do these notes above the staff sound so flat and spread?*
  - a. Raise your tongue, bring corners in, don’t over tongue or be staccato in this range!

## Resources for Fundamental Clarinet Exercises

