



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**Developing Your Individual Oboists and
Oboe Section: Ensemble Essentials for the
Non-Oboist Band Director**

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Developing Your Individual Oboists and Oboe Section: Ensemble Essentials for the Non-Oboist Band Director

2023 TBA Clinic Presented by: Serena Finnigan, Jessica Maus

Oboes in the Ensemble (2nd year and beyond)

What does the individual need:

- Working oboe (adjustments in right place- play tested by oboist each year)
 - Guide for oboe adjustments:
<https://carlosoboe.com/oboe-adjustment-guide/>
- Reed source (multiple working reeds and proper reed case)
 - Extra stash of reeds - purchase 3 reeds (medium to professional in strength)
- Personal tuner with pick up microphone
- Water cup for reed
- Lesson teacher/ band director individual attention

Equipment:

School Owned Oboes

- Have lesson teacher play/test instruments prior to each school year
- If available, find an oboe specialist for repair

When purchasing instruments for your school, we recommend:

- FOX Renard 333 - plastic, beginner model
- FOX 300- plastic, full conservatory
- FOX 450- option of plastic top joint, bottom joint grenadilla wood
- Loree AK- professional

Reeds

- Students should play on homemade reeds right from the start. If you have a private teacher that makes reeds, have students start using the teacher reeds right away.
- “Always have 3 good reeds in your reed case”
- Other reed sources:
 - Bocalmajoritystore.com
 - Wildflowerreeds.com
 - obonik.com
- Reed Cases (Pro Tec Oboe reed case, holds 8 reeds, \$15 on amazon)
- Rotate Reeds to increase life span

When your oboist is setting up:

Reeds:

- Check they are using a reed case
 - 5-12 reed case, monitor for old reeds! Encourage students to alternate reeds to improve life and to not get so used to one favorite reed.
- Check they are using a water cup to soak their reed
 - Soak reeds for a few minutes at the beginning of class
 - New reeds soak (2-3 min) for less time than old reeds (3-4 min).
 - Reeds are like sponges - can only soak up so much water
 - Leaving in the water cup for the entire class period can waterlog the reed and deteriorate it faster
- Occasionally, ask to see their reed.
 - Shouldn't have chips out of it, cracks or be discolored
 - Reeds should have an overlap or in reed terms be "slipped" to one side
 - Clean inside of reed:
 - Purchase Zen Pipe Cleaners Hard Bristle or any other brand but NOT the fuzzy-craft type pipe cleaners (these will leave pieces of fuzz in the reed)
 - Wet the pipe cleaner in the faucet
 - Feed pipe cleaner gently through the cork end of the reed
 - This process can be done 1-2x a month to help the longevity of the reed as well
 - Reed Adjustment Guide:
<https://www.pnwreeds.com/reedguides/how-to-fix-reeds-without-any-reed-tools>
- Occasionally, ask your oboe students
 - "How are your reeds?"
 - "How many good reeds do you have?"
 - "Which reed are you using today? A? B? C?" this helps ensure that they are rotating and not always using the same reed daily
 - If you have conversations with your students about their reeds it normalizes you talking to them about their reeds and when they "shouldn't be used in class" and need to be retired
- Reed Pitch
 - Reeds should "crow" a -10 to -20 cent flat C
 - Crowing means - lips seal around on the thread of reed and blow with an open throat gently at first, then increase the air speed, one should get a double octave C.
 - The general pitch of the reed when played normally is **around an A**
 - Lips in the middle of the reed, not pinching or squeezing in the center
 - Reeds *can (and should)* play a range of notes - from Ab-C# but for the basic embouchure should be stable playing an Ab-A

- [Oboe Basics: Reed Pitch Instruction](#)
- [Oboe Basics: Reed Pitch Practice.mp4](#)

What should the embouchure look like?

- Corners close to natural position, or slightly forward
- Teeth open
- Lips like a drawstring backpack around the reed (even pressure all the way around)
- Should see some of the dry part of the top and bottom lip
- [Oboe Basics: Stage 1 Embouchure](#)
- [Oboe Basics: Embouchure and Reed Practice](#)

Sectionals

- Sectionals with just oboe section in first semester; developing range, intonation, region music, individual vibrato
 - Tone Quality as #1 (Always comment on this even when working on other things too) If students are having trouble with tone/ pitch then start back from square one with their embouchure and air!
 - Intonation
 - Tuner drone matching - even in middle school from the get go!
 - Reed alone - Ab or A
 - Vibrato:
 - Should be practiced daily if you want the player to maintain and utilize
 - Beginning of the year - practice on a single note (middle range notes is easiest, second line G - middle space C)
 - Met at 60 - pulse quarter notes, pulse eighth notes, pulse triplets, pulse sixteenth notes
 - Range
 - Goals for the end of their 1st year of playing:
 - being able to achieve a below the staff D to above the staff C
 - 2nd year players need to start expanding to low Bb and up to high Eb
 - Lower range notes need finger technique
 - Finger technique-rocking/sliding between keys on below the staff Bb-B, and especially C-C#/Db which is by rocking the Right pinky
 - *side note, C-Eb needs to be Left Eb most often but sliding is ok if necessary
- Sectionals adding Flutes, 2nd semester; still developing individual skills but also working to balance to flute and match pitch with flute section

Pitch Matching (assuming the reed is quality and made in tune)

- Using good ensemble skills? Isolate the issue if possible and check:
 - Playing with the same volume?
 - Playing with the correct embouchure?
 - Playing with enough air support?
- Double reeds can adjust the pitch a half step in both directions, can siren on reed only to demonstrate
- Too sharp? Open teeth, less reed, less embouchure pressure
- Too flat? Little more embouchure pressure around reed (equal all the way around, like drawstring backpack), little more reed, possibly little fast air stream

Concert F

- Once your oboes can play a first space F in tune with a good tone, then consider having your oboists alternate 1st space F and 5th line F (with octave key)
 - Both are common in middle school music ranges

Oboe Section too loud??

- Try alternating oboe players
- Isolate oboes with the section who you want them to balance/ listen to, tell them if they can't hear the other section they are playing too loud

Private Lesson Instruction

You want this person to be a resource for you!

If a private lesson teacher is *not* available for your oboists, we recommend that the band director build time in sectional schedule to meet with oboe students individually on a weekly basis.

Suggested Interview Questions for hiring a private oboe teacher:

- Tell us your methodology for starting a beginner oboe student
 - Embouchure
 - Air
 - Articulation
 - Hand Position
 - Technique
- Do you make reeds for students? If not, can you adjust the reeds they purchase?
Cost per reed?
- Will you have enough room in your schedule for *all* the oboe students in the program?
Do you intend to teach in the area long term?
- What is an outline of your curriculum for students?

What method book do students work from?

What skills should a beginner have at the end of the first year of playing?

What skills would an oboist have at the end of middle school?

(Make sure their goals align with yours)

- Have your potential teacher play for you. Do you like their tone?
- Does the teacher communicate well through email and phone?
Communicate both ways prior to the interview to make sure they respond to both and seem professional.
- Watch them teach a lesson, either live or via video.

Fingerings Guide:

Alternate Fingerings/ Oboe Specific Technique

Hierarchy of The Three F's - **Teach in this order!**

- #1 - Left F (teach early - even before Regular F)
 - Most commonly used in band due to method books and key signatures/scales (Bb, Eb)
 - Use when preceded or followed by a C#/Db, D, or Eb



- #2 - Regular F (Banana key-most commonly nicknamed)
- Use in Chromatic, F and C scales



- #3 - Forked F (worst tone and tuning on most oboes)
 - Use in Ab, Db key signatures/scales
 - Use in patterns that obligate both pinkies before or after the F



Half Hole Technique

- Roll 1st finger to uncover hole of B key
- Only roll enough to uncover, common for students to roll too much
- Practice playing Low D to Half Hole D, moving only first finger in rolling motion
- Practice playing Low Eb to Half Hole Eb, moving only first finger in rolling motion

Chromatic Scale Technique

- Low C to C# Chromatic- rocking motion. Use second knuckle for the C and tip of pinkie for C#
- Low B to Bb- rocking motion. When playing low Bb you can also hold down the B key; Press pinkie between Bb and B key pressing both at once, rock pickie to B key and let off the Bb key to play B

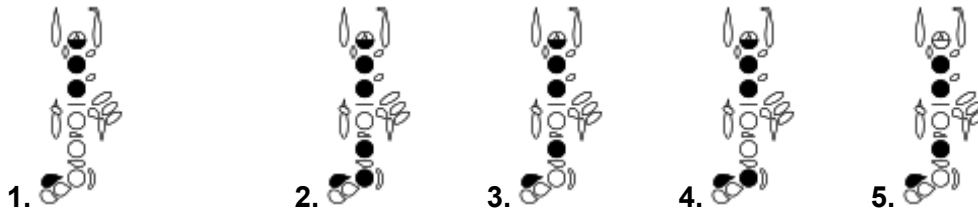
High Note Fingerings

All subject to tuning for your specific instrument and private lesson teacher preference!

High C#/Db, often not played correctly! (LH - Index finger UP!)

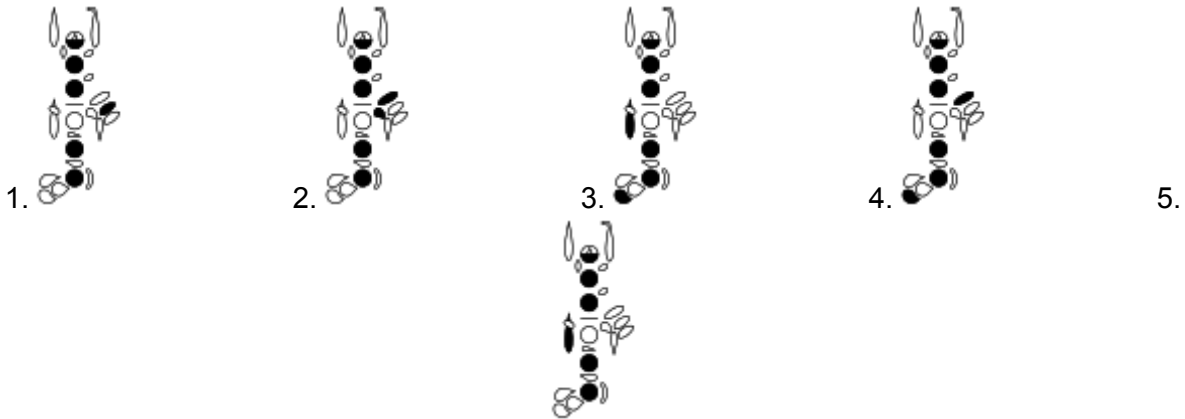


High D has several options, as a beginner it is best to stick with one. As the player advances, switching to a fingering that is more stable with accurate tuning is best.



1. General Pedagogy Book Fingering - tendency is quite sharp
2. Full High D
3. Full High D Opt. 1
4. Full High D Opt. 2
5. Full High D NO Half-Hole

High D#/Eb and E



1. High D#/Eb - LH Pinky is most commonly on the wrong key!!! Attributes to pitch issues.
2. High E LH
 - a. Use in the F Major scale
 - b. Use when approaching or descending to a C#/Db
3. High E RH
 - a. Use in Chromatic Scale
 - b. Use when approaching or descending to a D#/Eb
4. High E Combo - Not often utilized! Use as a last resort!
5. High E Short - Used in fast passages and pinky changes

Middle School 7th/8th Grade:

Texas PML Grade 2 is a great starting point. These are some of our personal favorites!

Title	Composer	Arranger	Publisher [Collection]	Grade	Specification
Elegaic Dance	Head		Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.	2	
Presto	Head		Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.	2	
Largo Allegretto	Marcello	Rothwell	J&W Chester, Ltd.	2	
Adagio	Bach	Rothwell	J&W Chester, Ltd.		
Sinfonia	Bach	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]		
Two Menuettos	Bach	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]		
Gavotta	Goedicke	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]	2	
Gavotte	Gossec	Johnson	Rubank, Inc.	2	
Menuetto and Presto	Haydn	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]	2	(play both)
Gavotte	Head		Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.	2	

Andante and Allegro	Loeillet	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]	2	(play both)
Sonata in C Major	Loeillet	Rothwell	J&W Chester, Ltd.	2	(play one mvt)
Allegretto	Mozart	Scarmolin	Ludwig Music Publishing Company	2	
Sonatina	Mozart	Voxman	Rubank, Inc. [Concert and Contest Collection]	2	(play one mvt)
Siciliana	Pergolesi	Johnson	Rubank, Inc.	2	
Aria	Vivaldi	Jaeger	Hal Leonard Music, Inc. [Master Solos Intermediate Level]	2	

High School:

Texas PML Grade 1 and 2

Choosing a solo should be a conversation between student and lesson teacher

Beginning Oboe Class: Fundamentals for Your Future Oboists

Teach with the End Goal in Mind!

Shape students to be soloists in your Band

- Grade 4 and 5 literature often requires oboe soloists, literature is limited if you do not have an oboe soloist.

Instrument Selection

Look for students with the following “personality traits”:

- Looks you in the eye and follows instructions well
- Enjoys homework
- Likes being the center of attention
- Wants to practice an instrument
- Possible piano background
- Patience to handle longer learning curve

Physical Factors:

- Detrimental physical factors (i.e. double joints, hand size, pronounced underbite, short upper lip, cannot match sung pitches).
- Non-detrimental (i.e. braces, facial structure).

Class Environment

Clear Expectations

- Have a parent meeting and/or make a contract for parents with written expectations regarding reeds and private lessons.

Class Dynamic

- Tell students what they are doing correct or well. Positive reinforcement will help every student feel they are achieving- in a class of overachievers this is important!
- Have the kids play individually and give them feedback. Tell them what they need to work on to improve. Praise them for improvements.
- Goal is that each child feels like they are an Oboe Player- start talking early about making reeds, summer camps to learn reed making and playing with other band kids

The First Two Weeks

Before you Start Playing!

- Learn Parts of Instrument
- Instrument Assembly, including soaking reed in reed cup
- Basic Music Theory: musical alphabet, reading notes on a staff
- How to assemble music stand, How to work metronome
- Name on reed case and instrument case

First Sounds!

- Embouchure
 - Have mirrors that attach to stands so students can see embouchure
 - Syllable “oo”; teeth are apart
 - Should see some of top lip and some of bottom lip on the reed
 - Dry part of the lip touches the reed
 - Lips around reed like a draw string- equal pressure all the way around
 - Common embouchure pitfalls-bunching chin, squeezing top and bottom lip together and not using corners in, teeth too closed
- Breathing/Air
 - Imitate the feeling of back pressure using a balloon and a straw
 - Breath through the mouth, reed stays on bottom lip for the breath
 - Deep breath in, Fast air out
- First Notes
 - B A G F# E D
 - F (banana key)
 - C Scale
- Articulation
 - You can start teaching as soon as students can make a steady sound with correct embouchure
 - Syllable “Tu” interrupts the air stream
 - Tip of Tongue touches the tip of the reed lightly

Recommended Method Book and Resource for Beginner Class Instruction:

- Beginner Class Boot Camp by Sally Bohls and Jennifer Auerbach

- Method book you can use to teach oboe and bassoons separately or together, sequence written for oboe and bassoons not full band instruction.
- Find online at bocalmajoritystore.com

Beginner Year- 2nd Semester

Vibrato

- Once students can play with a good tone, with good air support you can start teaching vibrato
- Teach students to make pulses of air, start by practicing without the oboe
- Common pitfalls of vibrato are not using enough air or letting embouchure move
- Have students practice metered vibrato: quarters, eighths, then triplets
- Build a habit of adding vibrato to all long notes, start incorporating it into your music
- Listen to examples of oboists using vibrato on CD or your private teacher

Building Range

- Use scales to learn new notes and extend the range
- Do long tones on the chromatic scale at the beginning of class and each week add a new note
- Often Band Method Books have incorrect or poor choices for fingerings; get a finger chart from your private teacher or reliable source

Solo Recommendations

Solo chosen should be based on student ability, work ethic, drive/motivation, and amount of time to learn the solo.

Beginners 6th Grade:

Texas PML Grade 3 are great for this age and ability! <http://wwwdev.uiltexas.org>

Title	Composer	Publisher [Collection]	Specification
Standard of Excellence Festival Solo Book 1	Pearson/Elledge	Neil A Kjos Music Co	CD Accompaniment
Standard of Excellence Festival Solo Book 2	Pearson/Elledge	Neil A Kjos Music Co	CD Accompaniment
1st Recital Series for Oboe	Various	Curnow Music Distribution	No Dotted Rhythmic Patterns
Oboe Solos Level 1	Various	Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.	
Oboe Solos Level 2	Various	Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.	High C and Dotted 8th/16th Rhythms
Classic Festival Solos 1	Various	Belwin Mills Publishing Corp.	
Classic Festival Solos 2	Various	Belwin Mills Publishing Corp.	
Time for Solos-First Division Band Course	Edelfsen/Best	Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.	No higher level rhythmic patterns

First Repertoire Pieces For Oboe	Various	Boosey & Hawkes Inc.	
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Clinician Contact Information

We are happy to answer any questions!

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