

Recruitment to First Songs: Surviving the First Three Months of Elementary Band and Orchestra

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RECRUITMENT

❖ Demonstration Assemblies

- The purpose of the demonstration assembly is to provide potential students with the menu of instruments they can choose from.
- Should students or teachers demonstrate the instruments? Both!
 - Student demonstrators have a performance opportunity. The audience will hear a model of what they may sound like playing an instrument.
 - Teacher demonstrators can perform with student demonstrators or be the sole demonstrator.
- Perform a variety of music to remind students that any instrument can play any type of music.
- Advertise how to join the “Music Team”

❖ Meet Your Instrument Night/Parent Information Night

- Who is involved?
 - Prospective students and their parents
 - All music staff (instrumental, choral and general music staff members)
 - High school student helpers
 - Booster parents
 - Music dealer
- Parents complete Google Form to RSVP for the event ahead of time. This allows you to collect student enrollment information, estimate how many attendees to expect and find out who can't attend but is interested in enrolling.
- The night opens with a brief meeting which gives an overview of the elementary instrumental music program, an explanation of the music dealer's rental program and instructions for participating in the “meet your instrument” part of the event.
- “Meet Your Instrument”
 - Students and parents turn a signed waiver to participate and receive an instrument passport.
 - Students and their parents are encouraged to visit at least 3 instrument stations to hold and try to produce a sound on the instrument. Each instrument station is staffed by music teachers (1-2) and high school

student helpers (1-3). Students spend 1-2 minutes at a station and receive a rating on their passport before they move on. Ratings (in the form of emojis) are either “this would be a great choice for you” or “this is a choice to think about”.

- When students have finished trying instruments, they indicate their first and second choice on their passport, turn it in and leave with information on the next steps.
- Why “Meet Your Instrument”?
 - Students and their parents can make an informed choice because they know what the instrument feels like and if they had success in producing a sound.
 - Parents get involved in the music making process from the very beginning stages.
- ❖ After Meet Your Instrument Night
 - Review the passports to check for balanced instrumentation in first choices.. If instrumentation is unbalanced, meet with students to see who is willing to move to their second choice instrument.
 - Confirm instrument choices with parents and give reminders about the instrument rental/lesson book purchase timeline.

GETTING READY FOR YOUR ROSTER OF NEW STUDENTS

- ❖ Lesson groups
 - String lesson groups (note: group sizes listed are my ideals)
 - Like instrument groups, keep students from the same homeroom together when possible
 - Violins and violas - 4 to 6 students per group
 - Cellos - 3 to 4 students per group
 - Basses - 2 to 3 students per group
 - Band lesson groups (note: group sizes listed are my ideals)
 - Like instrument groups, keep students from the same homeroom together when possible
 - 4-5 students per group
 - Can't keep your group numbers to your ideal sizes? Be creative and do your best to make groups that work for you and your students.
- ❖ Lesson schedules
 - Check with your music department and/or administration to find out if there are times during the day when you are not permitted to schedule pull out lessons.
 - The rotating time schedule
 - Build a rotating time schedule that spreads out what portion of the day students have their lesson during. For example, group A is at 9:00am for lesson 1, 10:00am for lesson 2, 11:00am for lesson 3, etc. Since most subjects are taught for longer than 30 minutes, this kind of schedule will avoid students missing parts of the same subject two lessons in a row.

- Create schedules for teachers to post in classrooms and schedules for each student (desk schedules)
- ❖ Preparing the instruments to meet their new owners
 - String instruments
 - Make sure everything has been included in the case that comes with the instrument
 - This may include rosin, cleaning cloth, sponge and rubber bands for violins/violas, and rock stops for cellos/basses
 - Put rubber bands on violins and violas that will be using sponges
 - Tuning!
 - Band instruments
 - Make sure everything has been included in the case that comes with the instrument
 - This may include oil for valve/slide oil for brass instruments, reeds and cork grease for clarinets and saxophones, cleaning rod for flute and sticks/mallets for bell kits
 - Brass instruments - oil the valves and slides
 - Clarinets and saxophones - grease the corks, number the reeds with pencil (to prepare students to rotate reeds from the very beginning)
 - Clarinets - put them together and take apart to start to break in the corks
- ❖ Communication with students, parents and teachers
 - Students
 - Send them an invitation to their first lesson
 - Parents
 - Remind parents via email the date of the first lesson as an additional reminder to make sure their child has the required materials in time
 - Teachers
 - Inform **ALL** teachers of who the new instrumental students are and when lessons will begin for the year. This may include classroom teachers, special area teachers, gifted, ESL, special education, speech, etc.

LESSON "0" - The Pre-Lesson

- ❖ Lesson "0" is the first meeting with students before the instruments arrive. This lesson is designed to explain procedures and expectations for the school year. (i.e. how to read the lesson schedule, what to do when you arrive for lessons, at home practice expectations, etc).
- ❖ Lesson "0" for Strings Outline
 - Violins & Violas
 - Rest/Holding position
 - Playing position
 - Names of the 4 strings and playing them pizzicato
 - Use trainer violins & violas (18 count egg cartons) & school instruments.
 - Cellos & Basses

- Rest/Holding position
 - Playing position
 - Names of the 4 strings and playing them pizzicato. Use school instruments.
- Movement activities to review prior knowledge of rhythm from general music classes
- ❖ Lesson “0” for Band Outline
 - Percussion (bell kit)
 - Army band video
 - Rhythm reading (4/4 cards)
 - Note reading (hand staff)
 - Mallet grip
 - Brass
 - Army band video
 - Breathing (Posture/Breathing/Sizzle Video)
 - Rhythm reading (4/4 cards) with sizzle & straw. Each student receives a coffee straw and a sandwich bag to keep it in.
 - Clarinet & Saxophone
 - Army band video
 - Breathing (Posture/Breathing/Sizzle Video)
 - Rhythm reading (4/4 cards) with sizzle & straw. Each student receives a coffee straw and a sandwich bag to keep it in.
 - Mouthpiece/reed setup
 - Flute
 - Army band video
 - Breathing (Posture/Breathing/Sizzle Video)
 - Rhythm reading (4/4 cards) with sizzle & straw. Each student receives a coffee straw and a sandwich bag to keep it in.
 - Embouchure with Pneumo Pro.
 - The Army band video is the Instrument Demonstration for Beginning Band by the United States Army Field Band. Each instrument group sees the portion of the video for their instrument.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCTeSjpDsIs&list=PLbG47jcMRxPhuGOccWp0RFLdUEjCqOhuq&index=1>
 - The Posture/Breathing/Sizzle video is from the Dr. Selfridge Music YouTube channel. This channel is a great resource!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eas_zJIEqeA&list=PLbG47jcMRxPhuGOccWp0RFLdUEjCqOhuq&index=2

THE FIRST LESSON

- ❖ The first lesson when instruments are handed out becomes a short review of the pre-lesson as well as new learning.
- ❖ Lesson “1” for Strings Outline
 - The lesson book we use for most of the first year is Rainbow Tones book 1.
 - Review of information from lesson “0”
 - The String Name Chant
 - Pizzicato quarter notes on each string

- Trainer bow hold.
- Students also need to learn how to open the cases, take the instruments out, put on sponges or shoulder rests and put the instrument away.
- **NO ONE SHOULD TOUCH THEIR BOW!**
- ❖ Lesson “1” for Band Outline
 - The lesson book that we use with percussion is Essential Elements. The lesson books that we use with woodwind and brass is Home Helper for Band and Essential Elements.
 - Percussion
 - Bell assembly
 - Mallet grip
 - First 5 notes (Bb, C, D, Eb, F)
 - Explain and sight-read Essential Elements exercises 1-10.
 - Brass
 - Air flow review with straw (paper on wall)
 - Embouchure setup with slideshow (straw in mouthpiece)
 - Explain Home Helper pages 2-9.
 - Clarinet & Saxophone
 - Air flow review with straw (paper on wall)
 - Review mouthpiece setup (Home Helper p.5)
 - Embouchure setup with slideshow
 - Explain Home Helper pages 2-9.
 - Flute
 - Air flow review with straw (paper on wall)
 - Embouchure setup with slideshow on Pneumo Pro and headjoint
 - Explain Home Helper pages 2-9.
 - All groups except percussion: Air flow review with straw (paper on wall) refers to blowing air through a coffee straw to keep a small piece of paper stuck on the wall.
 - Embouchure setup with slideshow refers to powerpoints from “The Embouchure Project” (purchased from the Band Directors Talk Shop store on Teachers Pay Teachers). Use of mirrors is important!

LESSONS 2, 3, 4 AND BEYOND

- ❖ Focus on fundamentals and repetition of all skills that are taught
- ❖ String Skills
 - Bow Hold and Movement
 - Rhythm aka Bow Strokes
 - Refer to the rhythm and the bow stroke that it is together. Review, review, review! For example, a quarter note is a one count bow and a one count bow is a quarter note.
 - Left Hand Position and New Notes

- Instrument Care and Maintenance
 - This includes reminding students of things that they or their parents should not try to fix.
- ❖ Band Skills
 - Percussion
 - Sticking patterns
 - Note reading review
 - Individual and group playing of book exercises.
 - Brass
 - Continue to review breathing, air flow and embouchure setup with and without straws and mirrors
 - Introduce how to assemble and hold the instrument
 - Introduce notes with and without staff notation (The Home Helper book we use starts with concert D, Eb and F. French horns start on the horn only pages with horn notes E, F and G.)
 - Clarinet & Saxophone
 - Continue to review breathing, air flow and embouchure setup with and without mirrors
 - Introduce how to assemble and hold the instrument
 - Introduce notes with and without staff notation.
 - With clarinets, I only have them play with the mouthpiece, barrel and upper joint for the first few lessons. The right hand holds onto the barrel when playing. When the clarinets graduate to the playing with the full instrument, they receive thumb rests (large pencil grips cut in half work great for this).
 - Flute
 - Continue to review breathing, air flow and embouchure setup with and without mirrors
 - Continue to use Pneumo Pro
 - Introduce how to assemble and hold the instrument
 - Introduce notes with and without staff notation.
 - The Bo Pep flute finger saddle is very helpful in correctly setting the left hand. To help keep the left hand fingers on the correct keys, I've used "Thumb, Skip, One, Skip, Two, Three" and "New York New York, aka no yes no yes".
 - When learning notes and transitions between notes, have flute students work in shoulder position first to train the fingers before moving to playing position for sound.
 - Instrument Care and Maintenance
 - For brass, I save at least 10 minutes of lesson 4 for teaching how to oil valves/slide.
- ❖ At Home Practice - Students Need to be Taught How to Practice

- Why? Just like students are taught a step-by-step process to solve a math equation, students need to be taught a step-by-step process to learn a new song.
- Quality over quantity
- Practice Smart - If your body is struggling to keep correct playing position and/or embouchure, take a break.
- Practice strategies to use when learning new songs
 - Strategies for Strings: When starting a new exercise, ask yourself the following questions: What strings and notes do I use in the exercise? What bow strokes (rhythms) do I use in the exercise? Are there any rests, repeats, bow lifts? Once you know the answers to those questions, begin working on the exercise with the following steps:
 - **READ & CLAP** - Practice reading the note names out loud while clapping the rhythm.
 - **AIR BOW** - Practice the exercise with an “air bow” to focus on learning the rhythm (bow strokes).
 - **PIZZICATO** - Play the exercise pizzicato (plucking).
 - **ARCO** - Play the exercise arco (with the bow).
 - Remember that you can divide an exercise up into small pieces before trying the entire exercise.
 - Strategies for Band: When starting a new exercise, ask yourself the following questions: What rhythms are in the exercise? What notes in the exercise? Do I need to repeat the exercise? Once you know the answers to those questions, begin working on the exercise with the following steps:
 - **CLAP** - Practice the rhythm by clapping the exercise.
 - **READ & FINGER** - Practice reading the note names out loud while doing the fingerings/slide positions. Percussion should review sticking patterns and can touch the notes on the instrument.
 - **PLAY** - Play the exercise.
 - Remember that you can divide an exercise up into small pieces before trying the entire exercise.
- ❖ Practice records - pros and cons
 - Pros: Students have a written list of practice instructions and objectives for at home practice. Having students record practice minutes can help the teacher see what kind of practice routine the students are developing. A parent/guardian signature can encourage communication between the student and adult at home.
 - Cons: Easy for students and parents to forget about filling out the practice record. Also easy for students to fill out a practice record without actually practicing.
- ❖ Teacher-Student-Parent Communication
 - Remind students and parents how to find you and how to best communicate with you. This is especially important if you teach in multiple buildings.

- If I send any paperwork home that parents should see, I email it home to the parents as well.
- Website: Great place to post lesson schedules and important papers for students and parents to access.

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My Website: <https://tinyurl.com/y4ulwaez>

Link to Google Slides presentation: <https://tinyurl.com/yxhsrfgg>