

Get Your Woodwinds Back in Shape!
Tips and Tricks for Band Directors for Fall 2021

Minority Band Directors Association Back to School Marathon
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Purpose of this session:

- Gain information that will help your woodwind players to be more successful TODAY!
- Identify areas in your program that you can develop over time

My background:

Clarinet player & private clarinet teacher at University & middle/high level in Minnesota, Illinois, Georgia, Texas & South Carolina, 10 years teaching many levels of 9-12 band, 13 years teaching collegiate level band and methods courses

My high school students:

- Had access to private lessons
- Came to high school with many fundamental issues
- Were in a social environment that encouraged them to participate and succeed
- High participation in marching & concert band
- High participation in solo & ensemble, district and state level honors
- Often upgraded mouthpieces, instruments at some point in high school career

The challenges

- You are not a woodwind player
- You are not a clarinet player
- You do not have knowledge / experience with double reeds

TEACHING THE WOODWIND SECTION

Based on 4 principal elements

- Tone – emphasize long tones, overtones, posture & embouchure formation, development of breath
- Technique development – hand position, relaxed finger motion, incremental development of technique
- Intonation – solve equipment problems first, understanding of tendency tones
- Phrasing and interpretation
- Articulation – minimize tongue motion, maximize air support

Daily warm-up routine

- Long tones on Bb, Eb, Ab, F concert 2 octaves
 - OR overtones OR Remington studies
- 5-note scale segments – based on Klose Exercises of Mechanism
 - repetitions of 3, slow to fast with metronome
- Other scale studies – Walter White, Claude Smith, others
 - “Mini-Scales” in Foundations of Superior Performance
- Chorales, lyrical studies – Tone Builders & Tone Studies for Band (Curnow)
- Four beat articulation patterns on major scales “rhythm of the day” – legato style

Consider your classroom environment

- Is it neat, orderly?
- Is there distance from you and first row of musicians? Distance from front wall of room?
- Angle flute chairs and give them space!
- Consider placement of stand if two students sharing
- Stand height, not too close to musician
- Posture – make a catchphrase out of it!
- Head held tall, bring instrument to the body
- Adjust neckstraps and pegs (bass clarinet)
 - Important note about bass clarinet angle & neckstrap
 - Bassoons must have seat strap (preferred) or neck strap
- Seating suggestions
 - For instruments that might “stick out” – place them in 2nd row or center of row (piccolo, E-flat clarinet, oboes)
 - “Stack” clarinets in 3 rows whenever possible, know they project best on hard floor surfaces
 - Group low reeds on same side as tuba/timpani
 - All woodwinds are omni-directional – what is most important is where they can hear each other

“Live Illustrations” Videos from University of Texas at Austin

<https://cml.music.utexas.edu/online-resources/lips/live-illustrations-by-professionals/>

- There are both fixed and fluid aspects of every embouchure
- Establish the fixed aspects, develop listening to discriminate how minute changes in musculature and air impact tone and pitch
- Encourage students to experiment with small adjustments and listen critically

Recommended Resources:

Clardy, M. (2005). *Flute fundamentals: The building blocks of technique*. Valley Forge, PA: European American Music.

Putnik, E. (1973). *The art of flute playing*. Princeton, NJ: Summy-Birchard.

Robison, P. (2013). *The Paula Robison flute warmups book*. Valley Forge, PA: European American Music.

Bonade, Daniel. Clarinetist's Compendium. Pub. Leblanc/Conn-Selmer. [Available online.](#)

Spencer, R. & Ledet, D. (1961). *The art of oboe playing*. Princeton, NJ: Summy-Birchard.

Spencer, W. & Mueller, F. (1986). *The art of bassoon playing*. Princeton, NJ: Summy-Birchard.

Stein, K. (1958). *The art of clarinet playing*. Princeton, NJ: Summy-Birchard.

Teal, L. (1976). *The art of saxophone playing*. Princeton, NJ: Summy-Birchard.

- Reed adjustment guide works for all single reeds

Westphal, F. (1990). *Guide to teaching woodwinds*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

REEDS & EQUIPMENT

Stick with the big names – Vandoren, major manufacturers of instruments

Legere reeds a good option for students who can afford them

- get trial strengths or utilize exchange program

Oboe and Bassoon reeds – many online retailers – Oxford Reeds (oboe), Singin' Dog Reeds (Bassoon), also your local oboists & bassoonists, double reed specialty shops (Midwest Musical Imports)

Pneumo Pro - Flute air direction tool – www.blockiflute.com

Reed adjusting – 220 & 400 grade sandpaper, reed rush, reed knives for more experienced students/directors (see Larry Teal's book)

Larry Teal Reed Adjustment Diagram, <http://www.saxlessons.com/reeds/reed-adjustment-chart/>

Reed storage – as important as having good reeds –can be made of 3-in square plexiglass or plate glass and old bike inner tubes

Mouthpieces – should be the first upgrade before an instrument for intermediate/advanced students, Selmer and Vandoren brands

Tell your students to rotate their reeds!

INSTRUMENT MAINTENANCE

- Dry, hard discolored pads
- Leaky pads – leak light, cigarette paper, air tests
- Dirty reeds and mouthpiece
- Bent keys – especially on bridge keys/joints, pinky keys
- Missing bumper corks
- Springs – flat & wire
- Screws – pivot, rod, adjustment
- Key oil?? Bore oil??

TECHNIQUE DEVELOPMENT

Developing strength and fluidity begins with hand position and understanding of finger motion

See Klose's Exercises of Mechanism



Scale Segments

- Bb, Eb, F middle and upper octaves establish even finger technique
- Lead students in class as you would practice individually with a metronome
- Provide incentives for developing technique
 - Learning all 12 major scales
 - Being able to play at faster tempi

FOR ALL INSTRUMENTS LOOK FOR:

- Curved fingers
- Optimal placement of thumbs
- Bent left wrist in flute & use of RH pinky as a balance point
- Use of neck straps, seat straps & pegs

- Get off the podium and move around the room

four B-flats

The image shows five lines of musical notation in 4/4 time, each starting with a first-measure rest. The notes are: 1. G4, A4, Bb4, C5; 2. Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5; 3. D5, Eb5, F5, G5; 4. F5, G5, Ab5, Bb5; 5. Bb5, C6, D6, Eb6. To the right of the notation is a 5x4 dot-matrix diagram where each dot's vertical position corresponds to a note on the staff. A solid black dot indicates the note is present, and an open circle indicates it is absent. The diagram shows the following patterns: Line 1: all dots solid. Line 2: all dots solid. Line 3: all dots solid. Line 4: all dots solid. Line 5: all dots solid.

FROM THEBEST SAXOPHONE WEBSITE EVER.COM

INTONATION

Barriers to good intonation:

- Mechanical problems – flute headjoint cork must be properly adjusted
- Sub-standard instruments
- Poorly maintained instruments
- Old or poor quality reeds
- Improper air speed and embouchure strength
- Effect of dynamic changes on pitch

AFTER INSTRUMENTS ARE “WARMED UP”

Have students tune by ear to concert A

Have clarinets & bass clarinet tune the barrel/neck of the clarinet to F concert

Best note for all saxes is their F#

Have students understand the goal is to adjust the length of the instrument for the most consistency

Oboe & bassoon – DO NOT MOVE THE REED OR BOCAL

- Push reed all the way in to the oboe
- Bocals come in a variety of lengths, usually numbered 1-3
- Reeds can be adjusted to impact pitch

TENDENCY TONES

Teach students from early age that alternate fingerings and “tempering” (adding right hand fingers to improve pitch on “open pipe” pitches) is a part of playing the instrument

Flute: C#

Clarinets: throat tone G, G#, A, Bb

Saxophones: C#

For more advanced students, give out tendency tone sheets, mark in your score where they occur

Recommended:

Tuning for Wind Instruments :Roadmap to Successful Intonation by Shelley Jagow, pub. GIA (<https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/tuning-for-wind-instruments-book-g110268>) – includes pages by instrument and blank tuning charts

Let's Play Bassoon by Hugo Fox -

http://www.foxproducts.com/00ce6679a3_sites/www.foxproducts.com/files/LetsPlayBassoon.pdf

Let's Play Oboe by Catherine Paulu/G. Schiltz

http://www.foxproducts.com/00ce6679a3_sites/www.foxproducts.com/files/LetsPlayOboe.pdf

ARTICULATION

Our problems with teaching articulation can be traced back to how we teach tonguing to beginners.

- Air flow should be constant
- Tongue motion should be minimal
- Motion of tongue for single reeds is a DOWNWARD not a FORWARD motion
- Legato style should be emphasized first
- Anchor tonguing should be discouraged especially in clarinet players

LEGATO – “doo” or “dah”

NATURAL – “tah” or “too”

STACCATO – “tih” or “dih”

MARCATO – “tut” or “dut”

Rhythm of the day: 4-beat patterns using quarters, eighths and sixteenths

VIBRATO

Know the difference between diaphragmatic and jaw vibrato

Work to develop these once fundamental tone and air support are well established

GETTING ORGANIZED

YOUR STUDENTS NEED

- Scale sheet
- Tuning tendencies
- Fingering chart – mark primary & secondary fingerings
- Trill chart
- How to practice routines

IN YOUR BAND ROOM

- Duets, duets, duets!!! – Rubank Selected Duets
- Trios, Quartets
- CD Sheet Music (available for flute and clarinet) cdsheetmusic.com or through Hal Leonard – methods, solo repertoire, duets
- Pop and classical solos and accompaniment
- Smartmusic
- Lead sheets to pop or folk music
 - Littlekidsrock.com – teacher resources/Jam Zone
 - 8notes.com – free midi arrangements
 - Imslp.com – free public domain classical music

ALTERNATIVE LESSONS

“Teaching is not required for learning to occur.”

Listening days – Youtube, CDs, Virtual class visits from local performers

Game days – Candy Land, Kahoot, Gimkit – add a musical activity to game play

Duet day – Work with a partner

Improv day – tonal or technical improvisations based on technical goals, motive or thematic based improvisations based on analysis or creating original material

Camps/Mini-camps/Guest Artists – Get to know your local college applied teachers and local symphony members

EFFECTIVE TEACHER BEHAVIORS

Maximize time playing and on task

Model with singing, playing, identifying model players

Listen to students individually and in small groups

Flipped strategies where readings and listening assignments posted online

“Listen with your eyes and ears”

Condition students to listen critically and deeply

PHRASING & MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

- Establish intonation “dress points” – who to listen to when
- Listen to individuals in your rehearsals
- Experiment with fingerings to solve pitch issues when possible
- Don’t be afraid to ask clarinets to play louder and with more air support
- Likewise, be aggressive about monitoring loud volumes in saxes and low reeds
- Use number systems & brackets to determined direction of line (Tabuteau, Thurmond *Note Grouping*) similar to a “plus one” analogy in movement
- Blend is important, but so is projection

INCREASE YOUR INTERPRETIVE SKILLS

Rolling Thunder March – Henry Fillmore

- Direction, +1 chunks

Shenandoah by Frank Ticheli

- Coach like chamber music
- Weighted notes to create phrase shape

Variations on a Korean Folk Song by John Barnes Chance

- Use knowledge of woodwind technique to devise practice strategies and monitor progress