

Rehearsal Strategies and Repertoire for Young Band

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PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT

YOUNG INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Prior to the start of the class, I'd like you to take inventory of and do some reflection about your district's (or institution's) elementary or intermediate band (or band/strings) program in terms of its administration, individual/small group instruction, large group/ensemble instruction, and dimensions (school/program size and organization). Even if you do not teach all students at this level, please describe the entire program at that level. If your teaching situation is unusual, make your best judgement as to what to describe/assess. [NOTE: If you do not currently work in an instrumental music program, you should outline realistically program features you would want in a program at either the elementary or intermediate level, addressing each item below.] Feel free to email me at the above email address if you have any questions.

Please provide a short description in the following areas, highlighting the program's strengths and challenges. Be as concise and objective as possible! **On the first day of class, be prepared to briefly present to the class (5-10 mins. maximum) your program overview, as well as turn in a hard copy to your instructor.**

EXAMPLE: *I have provided an example at the end of this document - a program overview of the elementary band/strings program in the Parkland School District - to illustrate what I am looking for.*

Name of School District (or Institution) and Level

Overview/Profile

1. Total number of buildings/students that comprise this level/program.
2. Number and role of instrumental music staff working with this level/program.
3. Describe instrumental music instruction in each grade of this level/program (i.e. Which grades, number of students who participate per grade, What percentage of each grade participates?)
4. PSD Elementary Band/Strings Inventory – Mostly larger, more expensive instruments (tuba, baritone, tenor sax, French horn, string bass) but also variety of other instruments to help families with financial need. 300+ instruments, most of which are in use by students each year. Does your level/program have any institution-owned instruments for students to use (free or for a fee).

5. What is the administrative hierarchy, if any, of your district's K-12 instrumental music program (i.e. K-12 Music Supervisor, K-12 Fine Arts Director, Music Department Head/Chair, Coordinators at each level, etc.)

Please describe the instructional contact time with students for each grade in the level at which you teach (4th Grade or 1st Year, 5th Grade or 2nd Year, etc.):

1. How many minutes per week (or cycle, etc.) do you meet with students? How is this done: scheduled class, pull-out lesson, after school full ensemble rehearsal, etc., etc.? Do meeting times/days change from week to week? What curricular materials do you use with students (i.e. method book, SmartMusic, etc.).
2. Describe the concerts and other performances presented at each grade/level.
3. Assuming you do frequent, weekly formative assessment with your students, what sort of other, perhaps more formal, assessments are administered at each level/grade.

Program Strengths

- What is working well for you and your students. What makes you proud to be teaching where you are? Try to list 3 or more items.

Program Weaknesses

- What challenges/obstacles do you and your students face? If you can think of far more weaknesses than strengths, what does that mean? Rather than using the items in this list to vent and complain (believe me, I know this is easy to do!), try to list items about which you believe a solution is at hand.

AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED "PROGRAM OVERVIEW" (for the Parkland School District) APPEARS ON THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW.

Parkland School District Elementary Instrumental Program

Overview/Profile

1. 8 Buildings, approx. 500 students each (4,000 total).
2. 5.8 Staff – 3.8 band and 2 strings teachers.
3. Each building has 4th grade (beginner) band, 4th grade (beginner) strings, 5th grade (2nd-yr.) band, and 5th grade (2nd-yr.) strings.
4. 4th grade bands typically have 30-55 students. 4th grade strings typically have 15-35 students. 5th grade band typically has 25-50 students. 5th grade strings typically has 10-30 students.
5. Currently, PSD has approx. 950 4th/5th grade band/strings students participating (approx. 23.5% of 4,000).
6. PSD Elementary Band/Strings Inventory – Mostly larger, more expensive instruments (tuba, baritone, tenor sax, French horn, string bass) but also variety of other instruments to help families with financial need. 300+ instruments, most of which are in use by students each year.
7. Hierarchy: Curriculum Coordinator/Elementary Curriculum Assistant and Building Principals, Elementary Instrumental Music Coordinator, Elementary Instrumental Music Teachers

4th Grade Program

1. 30 minute, weekly pull-out lessons (Sound Innovations, SmartMusic, supplemental warm-ups/drills). Schedule is fixed-day, rotating time slots (avoids first 30 mins. of math block).
2. Debut concert in May (3-4 full band, 1-2 solo/small group)
3. Six 1-hour rehearsals scheduled for weeks prior to concert in consultation with classroom teachers.
4. Optional: “First Performance” demonstration in Feb.
5. Mid-Year Progress Report – coincidences with end of “trial period”

5th Grade Program

1. 30 minute, weekly pull-out lessons (Sound Innovations, SmartMusic, supplemental warm-ups/drills). Schedule is fixed-day, rotating time slots (avoids first 30 mins. of math block).

2. Winter concert in December (3-4 full band, 1-2 solo/small group) and district-wide Spring concert in late April/early May (6 full band, one combined finale w/strings).
3. Six 1-hour rehearsals scheduled for weeks prior to Winter concert in consultation with classroom teachers; six 1.5-hour afterschool rehearsals (combined w/1 or 2 other buildings via shuttle busing) in 6 weeks prior to Spring concert.
4. Optional: Pep Rally, spring school fair, etc.
5. Mid-Year Progress Report

Strengths

- Establish large “beach head” of students to send on to middle school
- Large inventory of school district instruments aids in recruiting and balancing instrumentation, also allows us to help families in need
- Good staffing (student/instructor ratios are good) and administration support (for current program)
- Good parent/community support
- Most instrumental rooms have interactive white board (Ben-Q), sound system, teacher laptops (w/Internet), Finale, etc.
- Good-sized instrumental music library

Weaknesses

- No regular ensemble meetings; makes it tough to foster ensemble routines and “bandsmanship.”
- Many interruptions to weekly 30-minute lesson schedule (both 4th and 5th grade). Student uncertainty leads to responsibility issues; combined (or missed) lessons lead teachers to give some concepts insufficient emphasis.
- Some instrumental rooms aren’t in ideal locations.
- Recent spending cutbacks have slowed/halted purchase of new instruments and concert music.