

# Small School Problems:

## Solutions for Rural and Small School Secondary Teachers

What is rural?

20-25% of students attend rural school depending on which agency you ask. About 1 in 3 schools is considered rural according to the department of education.

U.S. Census Bureau	Department of Education	USDA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defines “Urban Areas” as having a population over 50,000 and density of over 1,000 people per square mile.</li> <li>● An Urban Cluster has a population over 2,500 and density of over 500 people per square mile.</li> <li>● Everything else is rural.</li> </ul>	Defines schools as rural if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A majority of its students live in rural places</li> <li>● It is located in a district with fewer than 600 students</li> <li>● It is located in a town of less than 2,500 people</li> <li>● It is “small” and located at least five miles from an urbanized area</li> </ul>	Classifies areas as “nonmetropolitan” if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An open countryside</li> <li>● Towns with fewer than 2,500 people</li> <li>● “Urban Areas” with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 people</li> </ul>

Likely characteristics of “small” schools:

- Total enrollment under 800 students
- Enrollment from any three grade levels under 600 students
- Due to low enrollment, many courses will only be offered during a single class period
- High probability that teachers travel to multiple sites due to individual site’s inability to offer complete FTE

## Music Selection

- See if any of your students can double or play transposed parts
- If there is a required list, check if the festival will allow you to play from a lower division list, make an exception for your circumstances, or add music to their list that works for your ensemble
- Try “flex” scored music
- Start looking for music early and often
- Check, and add to a small school music list (Let’s start one! <http://bit.ly/2FHavld>)

## Free music sources:

- Imslp
- Bandmusicpdf.org (searchable by difficulty)
- 8notes.com (searchable by difficulty, but limited access unless you pay \$20 per year)

## Limit festival bias

- Always fill out festival evaluations. If there isn’t one, send an email to the organizers (always give something positive about the festival when sending unsolicited commentary, and add a thank you for the opportunity)
- Find a place on you ensemble information sheet to inform judges about your school situation
- Whenever possible, become involved in the system. Can you be a festival organizer? Judge? Help create scoring rubrics?

## Low/No risk fundraisers

- Car washes
- Yard sales
- Patron forms (and concert program ads)
- Uncle Jerry’s T’s/Nature’s Vision (catalog fundraiser, no minimums other than \$250 in sales to avoid shipping cost)
- Old Fashioned Candy (candy sale with no order minimums)
- Grant writing
- Use Donors Choose ([donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org))

## Free or cheap technology

- Sight Reading Factory-\$35 per year for randomly generated sight reading exercises, any combination of instruments, customizable difficulty
- Noteflight-free web-based music notation, like google docs for music
- Teoria.com-free music theory and ear training exercises
- Audacity- free audio mixing software

## Other ways to get things for free or cheap

- Craigslist - call people with items for sale and ask if they'd donate it to a school
- Post ads for instruments in local news, in local popular restaurants, facebook, twitter, etc.
- Get music vendor to do an instrument night if they have a rent-to-buy program
- Get a music vendor to visit you at least once a month to sell things to your kids, and maybe give you free folders and pencils
- Woodwind and Brasswind usually sends free folders and pencils to schools if you ask
- Use Donors Choose ([donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org))

## Decreasing "fixed costs, and adding opportunities

- Use a school/district van as transportation if you have one
- Get parents on district's approved driver/vehicle list
- Share a bus with other small schools and other districts
- Learn to tune pianos (also, teach your students to tune and repair them)
- Use former students as section coaches and private teachers
- Get a travelling repair vendor to make a route to you and other schools on that route

## Recruitment and retention

- Be accepting of students who do more than one thing, and limit conflicts
- Schedule combined rehearsals after school (combine schools, even if they are different grade levels)
- Join the scheduling committee
- Build positive relationships with anyone who has scheduling power (counselors and administrators especially)
- Suggest concurrent enrollment (online or traditional community college classes for foreign language, or other consistently conflicting subjects)
- Take your students on trips, especially to festivals

## Dealing with increased responsibilities

- Choose to be on a committee you find useful or interesting before one is assigned to you
- Advise clubs that are music related, or are low maintenance
- Get a rolling cart, and laptop or tablet for travelling between schools
- Try to get a piano or keyboard for each location you teach
- Learn everything you can about differentiated instruction
- Learn everything you can about every aspect of music... including those you think you'll never teach
- Find one non-music subject you would feel comfortable teaching, and be prepared to name that subject if an administrator suggests that you teach a period of something you don't want to teach

## When the music store is too far away...

- Hair-ties work as ligatures
- Sewing machine oil makes great key oil
- Lighter fluid may help clean valves
- Sponges make good shoulder rests
- A pencil and rubber band can make a capo
- A straw and some electrical tape can make an oboe reed
- Car pinstriping tape is great for marking fingerboards
- Clothespins and book lights make stand clips and lights
- A wooden board with holes drilled in it makes a decent endpin rest
- Carpet squares also work for endpins
- Keep a set of small screwdrivers, pliers, and a piece of leather around for repairs
- Get a Deluxe Valentino Repair Kit