

Rehearsal Techniques: Intentional Teaching
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Effective rehearsal techniques that focus on intentional teaching can lead toward increased student engagement, higher level music making, and effective time and classroom management. While planning and administration will be discussed, the primary focus of this session will be on rehearsal strategies that can be implemented immediately for any level of instrumental ensemble.

Pre-rehearsal

- Score study: anticipate musical challenges
- Lesson plan: Standards-based concepts and objectives with considerations for the elements of music, historical and biographical information, interpretation, etc.
- Prioritize rehearsing challenges (musical)
- Rehearsal order: consider variety, pacing, and difficulty level of each piece
- Be the first one to arrive at the rehearsal
- Set-up: part of student routine
- Assign positions/chairs and music folders
- Post rehearsal order and announcements
- Have students number measures
- Require a pencil
- Prep librarian (student) to take care of music issues prior to rehearsals
- Repairs outside of rehearsals blocks (volunteer parent?)

Rehearsal

- Pacing: work towards peak
- Tuning: tendency sheets, chorales, directed listening, whom to tune by, vertically (chords) and horizontally (melody), beatless tuning, several sessions within a rehearsal, singing, use of tuner
- Warm-up: What exercise will grab their attention? Start by making music, in same key as first rehearsal piece, relate to rehearsal piece, chorale setting, breathing exercises, stretching
- Communicate with eyes, hands, arms, body
- Use sincere praise before constructive criticism
- Use humor
- Use names
- Talk as little as possible and stop seldom
- Don't stop for "silly" mistakes
- Wander through ensemble
- Breath with group
- Use metronomes and tuners during rehearsal (techniques vary)
- Use multimedia: record (audio/video) groups for evaluation/self-evaluation, listen to multiple recordings from other ensembles for comparison
- Balance individual/ensemble work (5%/95%)
- Sing: melodies, lines, chords, parts
- Balance: choose order of importance
- Blend: develop a hierarchy of listening (composition versus player)
- Clap rhythms

- Externalize pulse: verbalize, one section play while others count
- Mark missed rhythms with downbeats
- Eliminate ties in rhythmic passages
- Slow tempo down
- Eliminate a musical element: dynamics, articulation, change of tempo
- Guide self-critique
- Directed listening: chord quality, unisons, counter melodies, accompaniments, etc.
- Students model for others: start with competent players first
- Leverage volunteers: find them before rehearsals
- Teacher demonstration: play for them
- Move from the known to the unknown
- Repetition must have purpose
- Sight read often: start with easy to difficult over time
- Place sight reading between two familiar pieces
- Use separate folders for sight reading
- Point out mechanical problems, but focus rehearsal on musicality not technique
- Solve mechanical problems first ☹
- Talk over ensemble ☹
- Find problem areas by starting with a large group, then to smaller section, than to individual players ☹
- Teach by rote ☹
- “Old School” the students: yell, threaten, cajole, stare down, belittle, throw objects, only find faults, etc. ☹
- Announce upcoming expectations
- End rehearsal on a positive noteliterally!!

Post-rehearsal

- Establish “Tear down” procedure

Other Considerations

- Bring in clinicians
- Develop organizational leadership plan: section leaders, librarian, managers, officers, parent group
- Train student leaders (and parents!): leading by example, learn logistical routines, expectations
- Sectionals: lead by students when possible
- Open door policy for rehearsals: Anyone can stop in to listen to a rehearsal
- Match equipment/instruments ☹

- It’s not the destination, it’s the journey

-Ralph Waldo Emerson