

# *Creating a Successful, Engaging, and Fun Beginning String Class*

---

CASMEC Conference  
Fresno, California  
Saturday, February 18, 2023  
11:00am to 11:50am / DT Salon B

David Pope, Ph.D.  
Conservatory of Music  
Baldwin Wallace University  
Email: dpope@bw.edu

---

BALDWIN WALLACE UNIVERSITY  
conservatory of music



*“My goal is to get them excited about playing, excited about being in my class, and excited to come back the next day.”*

*“Know I am succeeding when they hang out in the orchestra room before/after school, visit during the day, and/or get friends to join orchestra.”*

*“While routines are vital, must change it up to keep students’ attention.”*

## **MY BASIC RULES FOR SUCCESS**

- Nothing lasts for more than five minutes
- Do not let it get stale
- Read the room & adapt
- Use more than one method book
- Use their energy to your advantage
- Set the culture in the first five minutes
- Get them excited about class
- Make them feel loved & wanted
- Stay positive all the time
- Let them experience success
- Give every group a cool name
- Make it safe to take chances & fail
- Play for them daily
- Figure out what motivates them & use that to your advantage
- Spend time to review & reinforce yesterday’s lesson today
- Routines & checkpoints are vital

## **TOP 40 WAYS TO KEEP ORCHESTRA SPICY**

1. Make the routines fun
  - Stomp-stomp-stomp, stomp, stomp (*stole from Margaret Selby*)
  - Bow-icorn
  - Magic box
  - Jazz hands
  - Orchestra stretches
2. Sorting hat for instrument choice day
3. Select interactive pieces (e.g. *Boomwhacker Christmas, Concerto Gross, One Bow Concerto,...*)
4. Give them something to look forward to & put it on a calendar
  - Real holidays

- Make up weird holidays (e.g. National Thumb Bump Day, National Teachers Can't Talk Day, Annual Pizzicato Day,..)
  - Special community or word events (e.g. Oscars, sports, movie releases, other nations' birthdays,...)
  - Pop culture events (e.g. Harry Potter's birthday, Super Bowl Halftime, invention of the Oreo)
5. Turn the mundane into the "fun" dane
  6. Practice snake
  7. Orchestra Olympics
  8. Secret orchestra greetings (e.g. grade, instrument section)
  9. Add a drum beat to scales (Drum Beats+ app)
  10. Use fun & memorable ways to provide common corrects (e.g. use an accent, save a kitten, gravity is strong, tell the gym teacher you need more pushups,...)
  11. Teach a parent/guardian a skill & have the student report on their experience
  12. Bowing license & ceremony
  13. FBI (Find the Bad Intonation)
  14. CIA (Correct Inaccurate Articulations)
  15. Posture police
  16. Find the rosin
  17. Rock your bow flexibility exercises (e.g. *Don't Stop Believin'*, *Jump Around*, *We Will Rock You*, *Y.M.C.A.*,...)
  18. Say note names with your "Hand in the air like you just don't care." (*stole from Margaret Selby*)
  19. Timed note reading tests
  20. Staff Wars competitions
  21. Music staff spelling bee
  22. Halloween candy music
  23. Rhythm construction
  24. Quick exercise challenges
  25. Special songs for when administrators visit
  26. Guests are magical...use them to your advantage
  27. Sticker charts to track progress
  28. Stickers (everyone loves them)
  29. Dr. Pope's Box of Randomness (*stole from Sara Given*)
  30. Birthday bow
  31. Instrument dress up days
  32. Composer elections
  33. Create "snackivities" (*stole from Sarah Ball*)
  34. Informal recitals & performance opportunities (e.g. solos & small groups)
  35. Birthday flash mob
  36. Three Penny Slide
  37. Mountain Climber from the "Price is Right"
  38. Orchestra spirit days (e.g. orchestra t-shirt, Fancy Friday's, "Fake" Flannel Fridays)
  39. Student's Song of the Day
  40. Bring the energy ever day

***"Embrace the crazy."***

**-Sarah Ball**