

CASMEC
Middle School Jazz Band----Where to start?
Saturday, February 18th, 2023 9:00-9:50AM
Jill Geist-presenting
Muzikljg@msn.com
909-631-8451

** All around introductions (guests), experiences, background info/ personal situations (classes taught)

A. PHILOSOPHIES—is there really a right one? Discussion to follow

- 1) Size of band? More the merrier. We are trying to create jazz enthusiasts.
- 2) Auditions? By grade level or ability? Or by invitation?
- 3) Instrumentation? Discussion later
- 4) Festivals vs. noncompetitive (motivational—school tradition-exposure)?
- 5) Switching out players for “traditional” instrumentation?
- 6) private lessons?
- 7) resources; boosters, ASB, funding??
- 8) building a positive elite reputation----do all band kids want to now be in jazz also?

B. Secrets of a successful jazz program?

- 1) **EVERYTHING** you teach in concert band carries over to jazz band
 - a. rehearsal techniques, pacing
 - b. **pitch, tonal production, posture, articulation, balance, blend**, discipline
 - c. PERSONALITY of conductor, work ethic, high expectations, humor, consistency, being strict while showing respect and care for the student.
 - d. Posture---bells up, stools for trombones? Trumpets standing please!
 - e. jazz band set up---rhythm section; lead players lined up---quick discussion-see last pages

C. Recruiting and restrictions (obstacles)

1. Scheduling during the daytime? Not enough periods or elective choices?-find a way to convince your principal to start small or ask for a stipend if done after/before school or several times a week. Is there a homeroom/AR class/enrichment classes that jazz can take place of?
2. Does your high school feeder have a jazz program yet? Is having a rounded program a priority or is it just marching band? This could help them build a rounded program.
2. When asking for \$\$ and time use successful programs as examples to share with your admin.
3. Don't have perfect instrumentation??—go find the smart kids in band (clarinets, flutes, oboes) or a general music class or guitar class and allow them to learn a new instrument. They usually rise to the occasion and feel honored that you asked them and have faith in them. You WILL have to do lunch time tutoring, after school sectionals, and “buddy system” until they are caught up. **If you want a complete band you will have to work at it.** 😊

4. Start recruiting for next year's jazz band at beginning of May. Your 8th graders can train them after school/lunch. They can practice over the summer and be ready for start of school.

D. What should we play? How to select tunes?

1. Depends on the level of players, experience and what you are doing in concert band.
2. For beginning jazz band, start off with something easy and with BLOCKED writing so everyone in the band can learn at the same time (not just sit back and be bored).
3. Try to find easy chords that don't change often for teaching improvisation.
4. Famous jazz standards (watered down or not) so they know the traditional tunes or the new "fun" stuff that can also be good writing. Again, what is your philosophy?
5. Pick a rounded program: blues, slow swing, med. swing, ballad, rock, latin.....expose them to all types and remember judges are looking for this in your programming (if you are competitive).
6. number of tunes? Quantity vs. Quality? Again, it is a philosophy. Does a sports coach start his team off playing only games and not spend weeks and weeks on building skills, conditioning and learning the game? I like the students to spend lots of time on 3/4 tunes for about 3-4 months so they know what good style, articulation, improv, independent playing is before we start playing "full on sports games"---building skills and fundamentals. When they are comfortable, then we dig in and pass out at least 15 more tunes for the rest of the year. They always soar when the style foundation is set.
7. Budget constraints---book sets---borrow from other schools, have a parent donation fund just for jazz music.

E. Rehearsal Technique/warm-ups

1. DEMONSTRATE FOR THEM the correct way---on any instrument if you can. It earns instant respect from them forever and they love it. CALL AND RESPONSE---change tempo and styles.
2. Set up your band---traditional, or in a box, do you have to reset your room every class period? Teach the kids to reset every day. Discussion to follow.
3. Time management---more playing, less talking, don't spend too much time on one thing.
4. My warm up is just scales using different tempos, styles, articulations and rhythms. In my opinion playing along with a warmup book is auto-pilot and they are not listening or being creative. Watch examples given.

F. Articulation style and exercises-this will make your band clean and stand out from the rest!!

LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN...MODEL MODEL MODEL teaching the correct style is the hardest part.

1. daily scales with correct tonguing style.....in general tongue upbeats and slur into down beats---see last page for examples-explanation to follow
2. Niehaus books? Great articulation that is written in for you
3. Must have sections write in the correct articulation (time consuming but will clean up the band).
4. work on repetitive single notes so they are not played square.
5. Latin needs crispier shorter notes---basic lingo. Again, they want to play, not hear you talk
6. Give listening homework....listen in class.

Rhythm Section: AT LEAST TWO players for drums, piano and bass

- 1) **Piano/Vibes**—recruit someone in band, school announcement (private lessons).
 - a. Most charts have written parts at younger levels
 - b. Give weekly homework for chords and inversions-watch demonstration
 - c. More than one player put on vibraphone or perc. Toys; have them alternate
 - d. Show voicings and comping patterns (add more every week—let them show you)
 - e. TEACH EVERYONE WHAT THE CHORD SYMBOLS MEAN----please
- 2) **Guitars/basses**—again school announcement or recruit from band or other music classes
 - a. They must be in tune ALWAYS---give them a tuner! **This is the fundamental pitch.**
 - b. Get them chord books and encourage lessons (**CALL CLINICIANS to get help**)
 - c. Amp settings and jazz guitars brands---guitar amp suggestion: Roland Jazz Chorus 120-
---bass amp suggestion: Roland Cube 120XL
 - d. Must write out a few scales and show them proper technic
 - e. Give them a paper keyboard and show them how to find their notes even in other positions....they eventually will need to be able to write own scales out and fingerings (see last pages)
 - f. Teach proper posture please (body, hands and fingers) Explain to them ergonomics.
 - g. Provide little practice amps for them to take home
 - h. Talk about guitar comping with piano/vibes and how to compliment and not get in the way of each other.
- 3) **Drum set/percussion toys—have a practice drum set off to the side**
 - a. Helpful if they can do rudiments and have basic fundamentals from concert band.
 - b. The drum music is just a skeleton—add in stuff later (fills, kicks)
 - c. KEEP IT SIMPLE—time is priority
 - d. Give them a recording (or have them download) to practice with and listen to. EVERYONE NOT JUST THE DRUMMER.**
 - e. Priority=high hat and ride cymbal.....then add the bass drum (feather) and then add snare pops when ready. AGAIN CALL IN CLINICIANS to help. Even a few times will help.

*******BASIC BEGINNING IMPROVISATION:--**they younger the student the better. You can even introduce it to your band and other music classes. They all deserve it and they have a blast doing it.

*must teach scales in band ----trade 4th (discussion to follow)

*pick music that has just a few changes and doesn't move fast or an easy blues tune. A latin or rock tune works well because they are more familiar with straight 8th notes

*if a tune doesn't have a solo section, make one!

*if the changes are too hard, simplify or change them in that section

*have them write out only ONE scale and circle the 1,3,5,7

*call and response (you are the caller)

*great time to introduce the basses, piano & guitars to make up their own stuff (watch example)

*go around the room trading 4ths (all band together at same time) and then the student. Helps with boredom and allows the student to practice without being scared.

*restrict them to only using the 1 and 3.....eventually add the whole arpeggio. (watch example)

*avoid the blues scale at first if you can (yes I have been desperate at times also). There are a few "sour" notes that will incorrectly train their ear.

*explain what the chord symbols mean---make them take notes.

*now go between two chord (see example).

*do ear training (chords and intervals).....clap when you hear the chord change

*talk to the drummer about changing textures and copying soloists.

*please allow many students to solo at concerts and festivals NOT JUST YOUR ONE OR TWO STARS who are lucky enough to take lessons.

*when they are ready and comfortable talk about how to build solos. This will come with time, experience and listening to great soloists.

*discussion to follow and directors trying to improvise also.

Sight Reading:

*when they know style and have a few tunes "mastered" now is the time to throw more tunes at them. They will learn tunes faster now.

*Sight reading will become easier. Again, concert band carries over to jazz band.

*must have a big library, friends to borrow from, or pepper on approval.

*sight reading tricks for beginners: ALWAYS AIM FOR THE FIRST BEAT OF EVERY MEASURE.....DON'T STOP!

Ideas on how to become a better teacher:

*Attend conferences, clinics

*ask for days off to go and observe great teachers

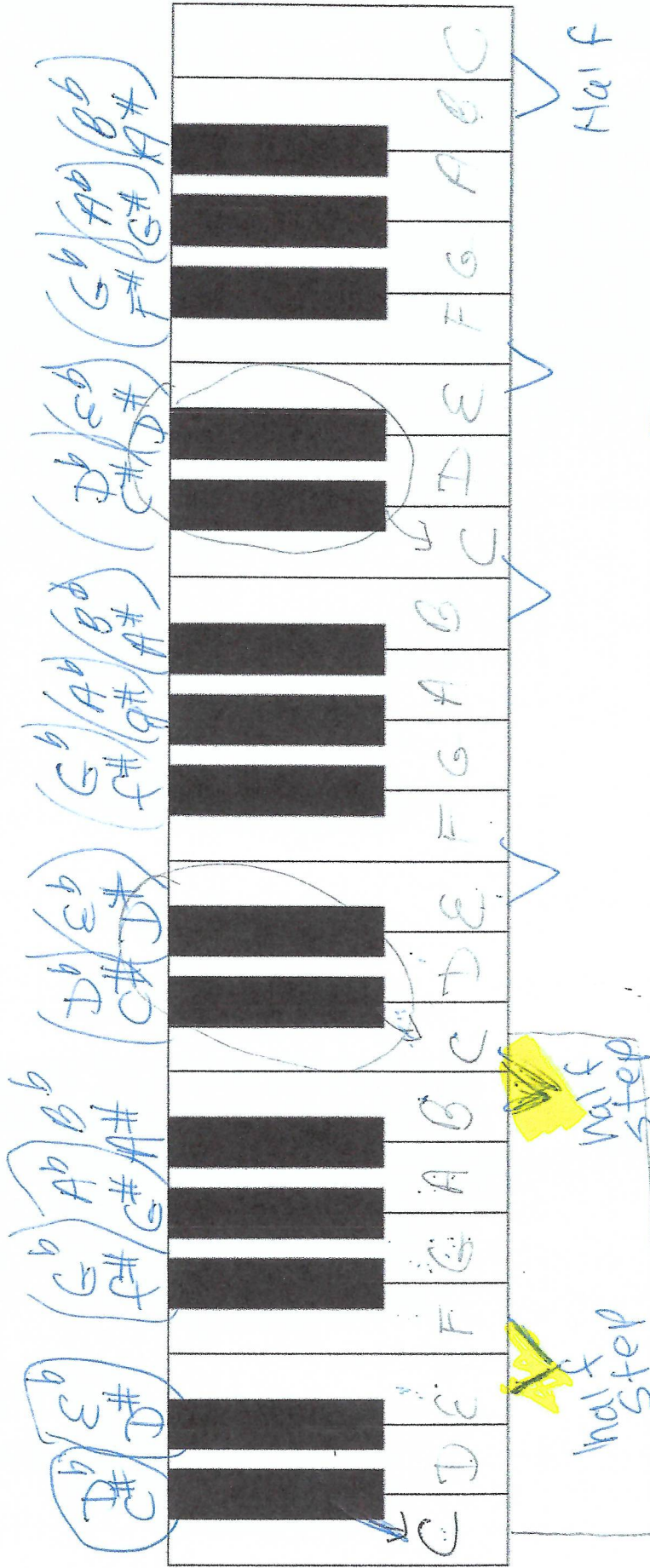
*network, call, email and ask questions

*CALL IN CLINICIANS to help you in your weak areas or just to run a rehearsal

*practice the instruments to be able to demonstrate

*JOIN CAJ

UP →



half step
half step
one octave

$F\# = f$
 $B\# = C$
 $C^b = B$
 $B = f$
 $B^b = B$

half step = closest note ↑ or ↓ you can move

= sharp ↓ half step / b = flat = √ half step

→ up right

$\# = \text{sharp} = \frac{1}{2} \text{ step up}$
 $b = \text{flat} = \frac{1}{2} \text{ step down}$

Half steps = Chromatic scale = closest note ↑ or ↓

Student example from zoom

