

Every Moment Counts: Mindful Planning for Better Days, Weeks, Months, and Years

- I. General Principles
 - A. We must do our best to predict two things - how much time and how much to do
 - B. Do what you can - some planning is better than no planning
 - C. We have an ethical responsibility to provide some order and stability
- II. Long-Range Planning (Focusing on the Year or Concert Season)
 - A. Calendar
 1. Mark days off, concert days, festivals, choir trips, “odd days”, etc.
 2. Compare your program’s schedule to the general school schedule - athletic events, school trips, testing, grading periods, special events, etc.
 - B. Concert Planning
 1. How many rehearsal days before each concert?
 2. Divide repertoire into “learning segments” - examples
 - a) This process is contextual, subjective, and learned by experience
 - b) You may wish to include layers of learning - solfege, rhythm, text, a cappella work, adding instruments, etc.
 - c) I tried to consider sections that would feel satisfying to work on during one rehearsal. Too small and progress isn’t felt; too large and it will require too much time, need to be rushed, or end up frustratingly unfinished.
 3. Given the number of rehearsal days and the number of rehearsal segments, determine the number of segments needed per rehearsal. Is this number reasonable?
 - a) Leave room for error - you can’t count on every day



QR code for full handout,
including calendar examples

QR code for slides



- III. Moving Towards Short-Term Planning
 - A. Begin the process of slotting learning segments into specific days
 - B. Work forwards and backwards - how do you start? What happens closer to the performance?
 1. Consider readability, how to vary the demands of the repertoire each day/week
 2. Build in review days - “Review Day Friday”
 - C. Provide opportunities for celebrating progress - formally or informally
- IV. Another Strategy: Working Backwards
 - A. Start at your concert and plan backwards first. When are you in your performance space? What do you want from your final rehearsal? Do you need to coordinate combined rehearsals?
 - B. How many days prior to the concert can you reasonably count on as “refining days” and not “learning days”?
 - C. Create musical goals for the ensemble (this can be done with the ensemble, too)
 1. When should music be memorized (if memorizing)?
 2. When should text be added / learned?
 3. When should a piece be a cappella?
 4. When should students be independent from the piano (if using piano)?
 5. These goals should vary based on the difficulty of each piece, and the abilities of the ensemble.
 6. These are simply musical checkpoints to ensure readiness and preparation that can help you adjust and adapt as needed
- V. Making Planning Work for You - Especially for Newer Teachers
 - A. Start somewhere, and expect your plans to shift.
 - B. If the planning process starts to overwhelm you, take a break.
 - C. As you and your ensemble gain experience it becomes easier to predict how things will go - but the unexpected catches all of us off guard from time to time.

Ultimately, what matters most is what happens each day, but mindful planning can help you keep your eyes on the horizon, avoid surprises, and teach your students how to manage their time, too.