

Terrific Tips and Rehearsal Strategies for Middle School Orchestra!

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Teach Procedures

1. Entering room, start and end rehearsals - on/off podium, packing up
2. Rehearsal procedures - instruments ready quickly, starting and stopping, practice it with timed races, competition, review throughout year

Posture/Position

3. Model - "Do what I do", nonverbal
4. Incorrect/Correct - couch potato position to perfect position, bow holds
5. Body - swaying orchestra, stand, swinging elbows
6. Position Games - grow an inch, starbursts, licorice, pencil
7. Add Double Stops - relaxes and shapes hand

Notes/Intonation

8. Slow it down!
9. Separate Skills/Simplify Passage: sing it, clap it, air bow it, pluck it, no slurs, finger along
10. Echoes by measure in a tempo
11. Change rhythms - swing it, reverse dotted rhythms, change slurs, etc.
12. Finger coordination - grow an inch, march and play, play it forte
13. Emphasize tricky notes - stand on Bb, stick out tongue
14. Disguised repetition - 1 person bow and 1 person finger, stick out foot, one point and one play, play it in a different mood, train by desk
15. Intonation - chords, long tones/drones, pitch detective, chorales
16. Practice manipulating pitch - thumb down, up, or level, work on finger patterns
17. Write in shifting and special fingerings
18. Flashcards for newer notes - G, C, and E strings or shifting
19. Scales in different octaves by section, eyes closed
20. In class playing check - one row or stand or person at a time
21. Walk around the room
22. Play pizz. sections arco to listen for intonation
23. Play with accompaniment for tonal center

Rhythm/Tempo

24. Flashcards - teach rhythm before introducing the piece, review in warm ups on scales
25. Subdivision - one section play repeated notes while rest of group plays their rhythm, play passage with all eighth notes and no slurs
26. Clap it, march it, say it, sing it, air bow it, pluck it, play it
27. Fill rests - stomp, they chose a word
28. Practice with accompaniment or rhythmic beat - use different tempos!
29. Switch instruments to learn new rhythms

Sound/Tone

30. Mechanics - the wave, wall practice, crossings, train: slow to fast
31. Bow speed - 0-65 mph
32. Bow weight - 0-10 lbs
33. Bow placement - bowing lanes and what part of bow (U.H, M, L.H.), follow director, follow section leader, sound detective
34. Bow strokes - refine these in warm ups
35. Pizzicato placement - 1st finger placement, specific part of finger, firm LH fingers, pull sound like arco
36. Adapt printed bowings as needed
37. Analogies/Color of sound - caramel, sunrise, clouds

Musical/Artistic Aspects

38. Dynamics - technical aspects, play wrong dynamics for whole piece, competition by section, backwards bow, hide the bow
39. Style and phrasing - descriptive words, demonstrate and match each other or a leader, scales with emotions, demonstrate phrasing with speaking, story telling
40. Balance - change seating, one person play "solo" and everyone else must accompany
41. Solve technical issues - hard to play musically if a technical issue is getting in the way, sometimes approaching a musical issue will help a technical issue!
42. Video record/Audio record - students make lesson plan for next day, start with positives

Ensemble playing

43. Follow conductor - change tempo, dynamics, beat patterns on warm ups, conduct the passage wrong, student conductors for the group or each section
44. Follow the leader - leaders from around the room, one bow and the rest pizz
45. Listening skills - mystery detective, try to mess them up, change seats: move with stand partner, spread out in room, circle facing in and out, section leaders in back
46. They are the judge - thumbs up/down, play or record and students critique
47. Pizzicato - practice it arco, incorrect/correct, practice it with continual retard

Rehearsal Atmosphere

48. Pacing/Delivery - program so you can work on artistic playing, nonverbal instruction, model, engaging and enthusiastic teaching (video yourself), end with a musical high
49. Motivation - teach kids not the lesson plan, set high expectations musically (perform well), success breeds success!
50. Your Attitude Will Set The Tone!