

# ***Hiding the Vegetables***

**Unique and Creative Ways to Teach Young Band Students the  
Fundamentals They Need on a Daily Basis**

***Erin Cole, Travis Downs, and Freddy Martin***



The Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic  
December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
2:30pm  
Meeting Room W181

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## **Incorporate needed fundamentals in the daily warm up**

*I believe the key is a balance between routine in the warm up and changing up how you present the fundamentals on a daily basis. Get creative!*

*Same vegetables, but presented in a different way!*

### **Method/Warm up Books**

- Choose the appropriate level method book(s)
- Use these books to reinforce the concepts you want the students to learn and are in the band literature you are working on at the time (ex. stylistic concepts, particular key signatures, time signatures, technique exercises, long tone exercises, chorales, etc..)

### **Scales**

- We play our scales daily as a drill using a metronome
- Continue to add scales and extend range
- Make sure you definitely reinforce the scales that correlate with the music you are working on. If you are playing a piece in the key of C for example, make sure that is a scale you work every day in class as part of your scale routine!

### **Breathing, Buzzing, and Balloons**

- We do breathing, buzzing, and balloon exercises often with our students. Freddy will be going into detail about how to do this with developing players

### **Peer and Teacher Assessment**

- I have our students use a rubric and assess their peers that play for the class. The students love this and so do the administrators that evaluate us. ;)
- We also use the all-state scale score sheet when they perform those scales for the class

### **Rhythm of the day – Have a contest!**

-Each week I have a contest for rhythm of the day. Each week the students have different parameters and they turn in their rhythm sheets on Monday. Tuesday-Friday a different students' rhythm is on the board for band to perform. I will already have it up on the board and students' name to the side just like a composers' name would be.

### **Sight reading of the day**

-Each day I will use a line out of one of our method books, sight reading books, printed sight reading that I pass out, or a piece of music.

-When we prepare for Large Group Performance Evaluation, we will read full band pieces. I will take them through the process exactly how it will take place in the sight reading room when we are evaluated. Sight reading folders will already be on their stands as they come into class. Every student has a "sight reading tips" sheet in their binder already that guides them through the process and reminds them of the steps and things they should be looking for.

### **Transpose simple warm ups to a different key**

-This will get students thinking and understanding key signatures

## **Smart Literature Selection**

### **Backward design planning – have the end in mind**

-Know the fundamentals that particular ensemble needs to improve upon and select literature that will help that growth.

-Spend the time choosing literature that is going to reinforce the skills you want your students to learn.

-Select literature that explores different genres and styles

-The literature you choose should also challenge your students with new concepts and skills

-Do not fall into the trap of choosing music that makes your band sound good the first time it is played. Instead, choose literature that will make your band sound good with time and great pedagogical teaching. There are plenty of great teaching pieces out there for all grade levels. Spend the time listening to recordings and browsing scores to find them!

### **Don't rule out popular, movie, and Broadway music**

- This genre of music can be helpful for rhythmic/syncopated reading and at the same time students will enjoy playing it!
- Consider doing a Pops Concert

### **Halloween Concert!**

- This genre of music is fantastic for working on enharmonics and chromaticism.
- We make it fun for the students and allow them to dress up in Halloween costumes for the concert

### **Commission Music**

- If you have the money, consider commissioning a piece!
- You will get to work closely with the composer to determine length, grade level, style/genre, etc...
- Students will love that a piece was written specifically for them!

### **Games- *Unique ways to reinforce the fundamentals!***

Band Baseball

Band Karate

Stickers on name tags for 100% playing tests

### **Technology**

-Essential Elements Interactive for the Beginning Band Student

[www.essentialelementsinteractive.com](http://www.essentialelementsinteractive.com)

FREE to all essential elements method book users

-The Sightreading Factory- [www.sightreadingfactory.com](http://www.sightreadingfactory.com)

-You tube videos and great recordings

-Relevant to what you are teaching in your classes and what you think your students would enjoy or have never seen!

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## Travis Downs

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### Getting your percussionists to enjoy what's good for them

*What do I want my percussion students to know and be able to do?*

*-Begin with the end in mind*

*Fundamentally Sound on All Percussive Instruments within the Section*

*Introduce concepts in a fun way and use variety. How do I apply this in my current situation?*

- 1. In the Full Band Setting or*
- 2. In an individual/sectional type setting (percussion class?)*

**Timing:** Developing Sense of Pulse and Sticking with it! -no pun intended :)

- From the very beginning stress the importance of playing along with a given tempo and maintaining that tempo.
- Recordings vs. the “dreaded Metronome”: (In the student’s mind)
- Developing listening skills (ensemble awareness-not a “just me” mentality)

**Technique:** Developing Tension Free Hand Dexterity

- Conditioning the muscles to respond correctly every single time- “Stick Control”
- Strokes: Understanding of and how/when to use them(They go Hand in Hand!)
- Isolation and pacing is key! Don’t expect your students to master many types of strokes all at the same time. Try to introduce one
- Develop a Daily Warm Up Curriculum that incorporates Up, Down, Legato, Rebound, Single, Doubles, and Multiple Bounce Stokes, and the 40 Standard Rudiments.
- Develop a Daily Warm Up Curriculum that also incorporates use of common auxiliary instruments in your warm ups (tambourine, triangle, crash/suspended cymbals, etc..)....percussion students need the opportunity to rotate and feel like it’s all part of the gig, not just a ‘rare’ event. If they don’t play it often, chances are they will not develop the proper technique when you get to the music you are programming.
- Choose your warm up material wisely. If it does want it should for the winds, but the percussion parts are lacking- write your own! Be Creative, or ask for help! Make it work for your program! Keep it simple! Maybe a base pattern with interchangeable measures/rudiment of the week/day.

- Create some that have a Groove. My percussionist can't wait to get to certain "Full Band Warm Up" Lines.
- Motivation of 2 Mallet vs. 4 Mallet Keyboard Playing
- Using Tonal Energy App even for your percussion section! (Visual Aid)
- Using the Smart Phone for Student Driven Discussions/Analyzation  
(Picture is worth a 1000 words?)

### **Tone** (On ALL Percussive Instruments)

- Evenness between hands
- Mallet Selections
- Striking Areas

### **Reading, Writing and Ear Training Skills** (Developing confident sight reading/counting concepts)

- "Touch N Say" or "Singering" (Fingering and Singing)
- Peripheral Vision Games
- "Speed Note Reading Tutor" by Mark Wessels
- Rhythm of the Day (Decision Making in Sticking Choices)
- Dictation Examples (Getting Students to Write/Critical Thinking)

### **Setting Up/Cleaning up** (Yes this IS a Fundamental!!)

- Instrument/Equipment Accessibility
- Teaching from the very beginning of mallet selection
- Rehearsal and Performance Set Up Appearance and relation to the "real world"

### **Exposure-** (Developing awareness of what's out there now and what you can do!)

- Clip of the Day/Week (Development of Analytical Skills and Motivation!)  
Should be Teacher AND Student Driven
- Play Along Click Tracks for the Whole class (of your favorite artist, app?)

### **Practice Habits** (Fun Ways to Create Positive Repetition and Reinforcement)

- Student Choice Driven "Practice Play List" (AC/DC, Pink, Jimmy Buffett, etc..)
- Rudimental Daily Practice Journal
- Submission of self playing for evaluation by class and teacher (i.e. mock auditions)
- Student Instructional Video Project

## **Brass Tone Quality For Developing Players**

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### ***Breathe***

It's never too young to teach proper breathing. Young players must develop great habits. Habits that can last them a lifetime. We will go through and discuss age specific and appropriate breathing exercises that will help players at every level.

### ***Balloons***

Learning the art of using the air properly that we take in is a huge part of playing with a great sound. The later we wait to instill these fundamentals the more difficult for the player and the tougher it is for the habits to become permanent. The balloon compression point teaches the student the best quality feeling which allows them to start down the road toward greater sounds. We will work together on how the balloon can help our students understand not only the effort necessary to play clearly but where the work comes from in our body and what part of our body relaxes to allow the beauty of the sound to happen.

### ***Sing***

For the middle school age player some humming is appropriate to begin the process of creating clear and professional inner body resonance with the instrument. Understanding that we are a part of the instrument gives a clearer understanding of how great musicians feel and work.

### ***Mouthpiece***

Understanding how air and vibration work to create the best possible sound give all players, young and older alike, the clarity of understanding to take their quality of sound to the next level of development. Mouthpiece buzzing is a must for the player at every age and developmental level. We will work on the proper set up, buzz technique and clarity of blowing down the center of the tube.

### ***Instrument***

And of course the final and most important aspect of the warm up is actually playing the instrument. Making certain that the air and vibration fundamentals have become a positive habit for our players. Working the long tone after understanding what the long tone actually can accomplish. It is important for our players to know not just what but the why behind our fundamentals.





