



Supercharge Your Rehearsals: Using Companion Guides To Unlock Your Ensemble's Maximum Potential

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Planning: Using Literature to Support Skill Development

Think of one of your ensembles....

What are some skills students already have?	What are some skills you want students to attain?	What are some skills you want to introduce?

What are some pieces that you already know that will support these skill goals?

Skills students already have:	Skills you want students to attain:	Skills you want to introduce:

What are some new pieces that support these skill goals?

Skills students already have:	Skills you want students to attain:	Skills you want to introduce:

Planning Guide

Choose one of the skills that you want your students to attain to focus on. Which skill did you pick?

What are some ways that you could introduce this skill prior to introducing the music?

What are additional ways that you could support this skill acquisition during the music prep process?

Tips to Creating an Effective Companion Guide:

1. Determine if the piece is a good fit for a Companion Guide
 - a. Consider the time it will take to create the guide and the rehearsal time to implement it
 - b. Do the demands of the piece necessitate a Companion Guide?
2. What to include in the Companion Guide
 - a. Scales to support key areas
 - b. Key changes – back and forth between key areas
 - c. Chorales (extracted from piece OR composed ala piece)
 - d. Rhythms – using a single unison pitch, then adding pitches
 - e. Technical Passages/spots you anticipate spending a large amount of rehearsal time on
 - f. Tricky fingering or articulation patterns
 - g. Phrase shape/contour and length (both melodic and harmonic, including dynamic demands)
 - h. Interval issues/intonation issues (solfege opportunities)
 - i. Duet type intervals to help kids hear lines and how the pitches/rhythms fit together
 - j. Accidentals and other theory-teaching opportunities
 - k. “You know your kids” spots
3. Technical Considerations
 - a. Format
 - i. Minimize instrumentation where possible
 - ii. Ideally, use side-by-side on music stand next to source composition (one page if possible)
 - iii. Label the guide as clearly as possible
 1. Include ALL measure numbers
 2. Label each section with a letter and descriptor (Who’s part are you playing?)
 - iv. No page turns mid-exercise
 - v. Utilize matched formatting in all parts (JW Plugins Copy Part Layout)
 - b. Address range issues
 - i. Match guide to the source composition as often as possible
 - ii. Honor the contour of the line while allowing playability
 1. Utilize identical line contours OR select some spots to displace octaves
 2. Consider challenges of specific instruments and students
 3. Guide can be used to push range experiences (ex: all clarinets going over the break)
 4. Multiple octave options allow differentiation and expansion opportunities
 5. Ranges will not always be ideal for everyone, but Companion Guides are “low stakes” exercises, so it is ok
 - a. Focus on doing the best that you can!

Companion Guide Examples/Resources:

- [Haley Woodrow – March of the Shadows Fun Lines](#)
- [Adrian B. Sims – Additional Resources](#)
- [Tyler S. Grant – Repertoire Companion Guides](#)
- Some of Tiffany’s examples: www.andrewhitz.com/companion