

Teaching Brass from a Woodwind Perspective

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First things First - breathing and air quality

- SLOW, LOW and RELAXED
- They have to start this relaxed or tone suffers with lip pinching
- In - sip - sip
 - Only used to have them understand the feeling of being truly FULL
- “Zombie” breath (show)
- Go back to relaxed in and out

NO “T” WORDS!!!

- “Tight”
- “Tension”
- These are bad words in the bandroom
- Instead use: “pressure,” “firm”

First Buzz/Mouthpiece Sounds

- WOODWINDS
 - Breathe RELAXED and FULL
 - Exhale relaxed (no mouthpiece, mult. times)
 - Again but with firm corners (with mouthpiece)
 - Again and start speeding up air until pitch starts to rise (F# clarinet, Ab Saxes)
 - Rinse and repeat until they get over the giggles, tone is pure (no spit), sound is steady and controlled (pitch DOES matter)
- BRASS
 - Breathe RELAXED and FULL
 - Exhale relaxed (no mouthpiece, mult. times)
 - Again but with firm corners (with mouthpiece, air only)
 - Again and start speeding up air until buzzing begins
 - Rinse and repeat until they get over the giggles, buzz is OPEN, sound is steady (pitch does not matter at this point.... yet)

Buzzing (Part 2)

- Keep working until it's a steady open tone (specific pitch? - not yet..)
 - Lip buzz vs. Air buzz – lip is forced and pinch, air is open – full face vibrates
 - Same for woodwinds
- Pitch starts to slowly matter
 - Over a few days, start introducing different pitches with a drone to match
 - Begin with Bb, C, and D concerts first
- When they're ready
 - Buzz familiar songs (hot cross buns, etc)
 - If mixed classes - ww's play, brass buzzes and fingers

Clarinet - Brass perspective

- FIRM corners (not tight....)
- Firmness comes from the sides
- No biting down, teeth gap
- NO smiling
- Corners DOWN, not back - especially true when working on brass high range

Flute - Brass Perspective

- AIR CONTROL
- Fast speed for high range, slow speed for low range
- Aperture size for air control
- Show with flute head joint - visibly see the aperture size change
- Similar adjustments happen INSIDE the mouthpiece (no “chewing” the notes)

Saxophone - Brass Perspective

- “Tee” - “Tah” - “Toh” on saxophone for high – mid – low ranges
- Same syllables for brass
- Changes to Oral cavity (inside the mouth)
- Changes air speed and volume
- A good transition to lip slurs

Lip Slurs - CL/Sax Pitch bends

- Clarinets and sax pitch bend by playing with the corners
 - Knowing what NOT to do is just as important (Dan O'Reilly)
- Same idea for brass when they're ready to do lip slurs
 - Concert F
 - F - E - F (1-2-1) without valves until they get the feel for the bend
 - Make it a competition! "Brass Limbo" of sorts
 - Who can bend the most without losing the partial
- When they lose the partial Ta-daaaaa... LIP SLUR
 - Again, but this time land on the lower partial and hold it
 - Keep minimizing the bend time until it is a partial slur with NO gap in the sound
- With more experience (7th and 8th grades) bends get more complicated but still do them!!

Brass Fingerings

- WW's have numbered fingers
 - Top to bottom = 1 through 6
- Brass have positions
 - Based on chromatic scale
 - First position = open
 - Second = 2
 - Third = 1
 - Fourth = 1-2
 - Fifth = 2-3
 - Sixth = 1-3
 - Seventh = 1-2-3

Fingerings (continued)

- Positions keep uniformity and simplicity
- Some kids don't know finger names
- Easier to identify notes and fingerings
 - I.e = Hot Cross Buns
 - Say/sing note names
 - Say/sing positions
 - They buzz, you play (matching pitch!)
 - Everyone plays
- Horns

- Positions still apply but don't forget trigger
- Can play same positions (ish) and notes as trumpet, sounds P4 off and is good ear training
- Might need their own run

Long Tones - EVERYDAY

- At first, DON'T name the notes
 - Takes too long, and is confusing for beginners
- Start on Concert Bb once it is fairly steady and open
- Remington Long Tone
 - Explain/show in positions
 - 1-2-1, 1-3-1, 1-4-1
 - Expand to 5, 6, and 7 in time as they get better
- Remington on F
 - ONLY when they are ready and are not pinching/straining to get the upper partial
- LONG TONES FOCUS IS TONE QUALITY
- Leave the note reading for the daily book exercises

Long Tone (Part 2)

- Introduce long tones ascending the chromatic scale
 - Concert Bb up chromatically
 - 1-7-1, 1-6-1, 1-5-1, etc
- Always buzz and match first... then play
 - They might not like it, but you're the teacher...
 - If you can't buzz it, you can't play it

Higher - Louder - Faster

- Brass players in their natural habitat
 - Try to play as high as possible
- Use to discourage it - fear of developing with bad habits
- Now it's a teachable moment
 - If they're doing it correctly... thumbs up! Go for it!
 - If not, then correct what you see and hear, then praise the practice and encourage it
- #HLF