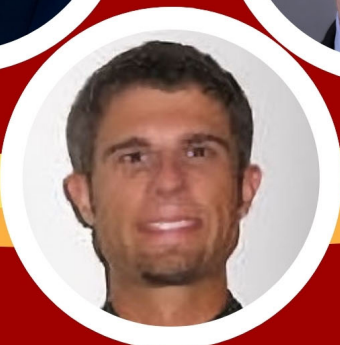


Demonstration Group: The Old Quarry Middle School Jazz Band (Lemont, IL)



BEGINNING JAZZ BAND TRACK

REHEARSAL LAB & PLANNING

The Midwest Clinic, Chicago, IL, December 2025

Clinicians

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ George Andrikokus | ✓ Matthew Johnson |
| ✓ José Antonio Diaz | ✓ Don Zentz |
| ✓ J Richard Dunscomb | ✓ Frank Alongi, |
| ✓ Antonio J García | OQMS Director |

Thank you for attending - and for educating the next generation!

Beginning Jazz Band Track: Rehearsal Labs and Planning

The Midwest Clinic, Chicago, IL, December 2025

In the spirit of “music first, talk later,” two rehearsal lab sessions with a middle school jazz band will be followed by a session exploring the decisions a director should consider before the first rehearsal. *This single handout is virtually available at each of the three clinics; we hope it will serve as a longterm resource for you as you examine beginning or improving a jazz band at any age level.* Feel free to share it with other educators by visiting <https://garciamusic.com/unpublished/BegJzBndTrackHandout2025.pdf> or scanning this:



Our clinicians collectively represent over 200 years of experience teaching jazz students of all ages! We look forward to seeing you throughout our Track:

- “*Day One: Steps for Success with your Beginning Jazz Band*” (W 12/17, 12:15-1:15p, W-192): Clinicians José Diaz and (via handout) Dick Dunscomb with The Old Quarry Middle School Jazz Band.
- “*Day Two: Next Steps for Success with your Beginning Jazz Band*” (W 12/17, 1:30-2:30p, W-192): Clinicians Antonio García and Don Zentz with The Old Quarry Middle School Jazz Band.
- “*Before Rehearsal: Planning For Your Beginning Jazz Ensemble*” (TH 12/18, 8:30-9:30a, W-192): Clinicians George Andrikokus and Matthew Johnson will explore the “behind the desk” decisions.

We believe it crucial to *teach* students during this Track, not just talk about it; and so we are especially grateful to welcome **The Old Quarry Middle School Jazz Band** from Lemont, IL, as our demonstration group. This award-winning ensemble has a long-standing reputation for excellence under the direction of **Frank Alongi**, who has been an active musician and educator in Chicago since 1999 and currently teaches more than 200 students in five ensembles at Old Quarry. Alongi has performed with a wide range of Chicago groups, appeared on numerous recordings, and shared the stage with acclaimed artists such as Heather Headley, Doc Severinsen, and Bruno Mars. He also toured Central and South America with the fusion rock group *Torre Fuerte* and serves as drummer for several Chicago-based rock and jazz ensembles. A two-time Guitar Center Drum-Off semifinalist early in his career, he studied music at DePaul University before earning his degree in music education from Northeastern Illinois University. *We extend our sincere thanks to the OQMS Jazz Band members, their director Frank Alongi, and the Lemont Band Boosters and families for making their participation possible!* E-mail him at falongi@sd113a.org.

Recommendations from each of our clinicians follow.

Jazz Ensemble Day One

José Antonio Diaz
Diaz Music Institute
Houston, Texas

Day One Jazz Ensemble Lesson: Getting Started Using The Blues Form

Objective

1. Students will learn the 12-bar blues form.
2. Each section of the ensemble will play a foundational groove to support ensemble unity.

Rhythm Section

Your job is to be the engine of the band. Keep it steady, simple, and strong.

Bass Guitar

- Play the root of each chord on every beat (quarter notes).
- Lock in with the drummer's bass drum.
- Don't overplay — steady and simple is best.

Drum Set

- Ride cymbal: quarter notes.
- Hi-hat: lightly close on 2 & 4.
- Bass drum & snare: soft quarter notes.
- Balance volume — not too loud.

Piano

- Play one chord per measure, hold for four beats.
- Use simple voicings (root, 3rd, 7th).
- Don't crowd the sound.

Guitar

- Strum the chord once per measure, let it ring.
- Stay light and clean — no distortion.
- Match the piano's sustained style for now.

What does the Horn do while the rhythm section works?

- Play whole notes on the root of the chord. Then expand to play roots, 3rds, and 7ths.
- Play the chords to the progression by harmonizing the brass and saxophones.
- Play rhythmic motifs that reflect jazz rhythm dialect.

Can you teach jazz? Yes, you can!

Keys on how to do it

J. Richard Dunscomb

Listen, Listen, Listen

Consistent listening to jazz recordings will illuminate how to interpret the written notes correctly and bring the music to life. This is the aural process musicians have used successfully throughout jazz history.

Begin by teaching the swing style basics

- Listen repeatedly to professional jazz recordings to identify and begin to understand swing style.
- Identify the jazz sound, throughout the entire ensemble. The rhythm section is particularly important in this regard.
- Identify the steady beat or time and know how to make it work.
- Understand the swing eighth-note concept.
- Understand jazz nuances, shapes, and musical language.
- Understand proper jazz articulation.
- Be able to sing confidently with jazz syllables.
- Learn to phrase in a jazz style.

Teach it!

Hear it, Sing it, Play it

- Teach like the masters learned how to play – hear it, sing it, play it.
- Listen to a recording of the selection.
- Have them sing along with it.
- Singing imitates the sound you heard on the recording.
- Singing is a superb way to learn jazz styles and interpretation.
- Have them play it.
- It works like magic.

Here is a list of suggested articulations

- | | | | |
|-------|---------------|--------|--------------|
| • DO | long | • DAHT | heavy accent |
| • DA | the connector | • N | ghost |
| • DOT | short | • WEE | scoop |
| • DAH | long accent | | |

Resources

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Jazz at Lincoln Center Resources | • Jazz Pedagogy – the Jazz Educators Handbook and Resource Guide – Dunscomb |
| • Smithsonian Jazz Resources | • Kjos Music – Jazz Method Book – Dean Sorenson |
| • The Kennedy Center Jazz Resources | • Doug Beach and Jeff Jarvis – Jazz Pedagogy book |
| • Jazz Educators Network - JEN | • Hal Leonard – Jazz Method Book – Mike Steinel |
| • Jamey Abersold Jazz | |
| • Jazz Zone...the Beginning – J. Richard Dunscomb | |

Beginning Jazz Band Tips

presented by **Antonio J. García**

Professor Emeritus, former Director of Jazz Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University

Listening

Count Basie Orchestra *The Complete Atomic Basie*—Blue Note 28635 (1958, reissued 1994).

Frank Sinatra *Sinatra at the Sands*—Warner Brothers 46947 (1966, reissued 1998).

Charlie Parker *Confirmation: Best Of The Verve Years*—Verve 314-527815-2 (1995).

Various Artists *Bossa Nova Brazil*—Verve 314-515762-2 (1992).

Eddie Palmieri *El Dia de Me Quieras*—Fania 7317241 (1982)

Mambo All-Stars on Various Artists *The Mambo Kings*—Elektra 62505 (1992, reissued 2000).

James Brown *20 All-Time Greatest Hits!*—Polydor 511326 (1991).

The Best of Parliament: Give Up the Funk—Polygram 314 526 995-2 (1995).

Stealing From the Masters

There's nothing more important than listening to jazz and imitating it. Have your students sing along as a group with Miles Davis' first 16 bars of solo on "So What" from the *Kind of Blue* album (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEC8nqT6Rrk>>, 1'31"-2'00"), considered the most influential jazz album in history. Break it into phrases; loop each phrase repeatedly for the students as they sing it back to you. Singing along with solos is a lifetime pursuit. Sing along with Count Basie recordings. Sing! Sing!

Beginning Improvisation

There's nothing wrong with starting with a blues, or chord symbols and related scales, or swing; but I don't. I want to use the language they already know. And that's usually half a major scale in an even-eighth feel. So I start everyone on a bossa nova and on a jazz tune they can improvise on with one major scale. Then I move to two-key or three-key tunes. I call the process "Cutting the Changes." If you'd like to know how this book and its approach are unique, consider viewing the seven-minute video at <<https://youtu.be/B-CrYlyappY>> (choose the hi-def video-imaging so as to see the music notation clearly); then read more at <<https://garciamusic.com/educator/books/etc.html>>.

...And more!

For a one-page Jazz History Timeline; links to resources (often with audio and video examples) regarding basic guitar, piano, bass, and drum roles; dealing with "wrong notes" in improv; audition processes; sound checks, a scat-singing primer; repertoire lists; jazz theory; Latin jazz tips; count-offs and conducting; starting a jazz program; jazz pedagogy resources; jazz and civil rights/social justice; technology; conferences; and far more, visit <<https://garciamusic.com/unpublished/BeginningJazzBandTips.GarciaFULL.pdf>> or scan this:



Thanks to you for educating the next generation! Email me at <ajgarcia@vcu.edu>.

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INITIAL STEPS TO JAZZ IMPROVISATION

Don Zentz

The most important thing in getting the young ones to take a chance with improvising in front of their peers is to empower them with fail-safe note choices to instill confidence!!

Enter: **THE BLUES SCALE (1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 8)**

The blues scale is a magical “cure-all” scale where all the notes fit the harmonic progression (chords) of the blues. In other words, kids don’t have to keep up with the individual chord changes – just the overall, big picture form.

12 Bar Blues = 4+4+4 A A’ B statement/restatement/conclusion

Create musical sentences (phrases) with the words (notes) of the blues scale. There is a syntax so that the musical sentences are not just comprised randomly. Even though the notes all work, it is vital that clear communication is present through the use of the notes logically. Just like how we learned to talk **BY LISTENING** and **IMITATING**, learning the jazz language in the same manner is absolutely essential to the process – like with ALL things jazz.

- **BLUES SCALE LICKS** – some basic musical sentences using the notes of the blues scale, and all not all the notes at one time in one sentence!
- **CALL & RESPONSE** – time, style, accentuation, feel
- **TRADING TWO’S** – two measures each / call and response with the licks / kids start feeling the time space naturally
- **DO LICKS IN NUMERIC ORDER, THEN RANDOMLY SO THE KIDS HAVE TO ID**
- **BASIC EAR TRAINING VIA CALL AND RESPONSE** – keep it simple, still two’s
- **IMPROVISE SHORT TWO MEASURE PHRASES AROUND THE BAND / CALL & RESPONSE** – again, kids will sense time space especially by now
- **GO TO FOUR MEASURE IMPROV PHRASES / CALL & RESPONSE / MY TURN – YOUR TURN.** – The goal is not to get tangled up and overwhelmed with too much space!
- **FINALLY – A CHORUS (ONE TIME THROUGH THE 12 BAR BLUES FORM)** – With the spatial priming above, kids should be able organize with some semblance of phrasing.

(NOBODY EVER SAID,
“HERE’S A DICTIONARY, GO WRITE AN ESSAY!”)

Scan QR code for suggested resources:



Before Rehearsal: Planning For Your Beginning Jazz Ensemble

George Andrikokus & Matthew Johnson

Thursday, December 18th • 8:30-9:30 am • W192

gandrikokus@d181.org • matthew.johnson@hsd153.org



Presentation resources available via the QR Code here and the link below

<https://tinyurl.com/BeforeRehearsalJazzEnsemble>

Presentation Highlights

Ensemble set-up

- Rhythm section to conductor's left, Tenor 1/Trombone 2/Trumpet 2 closest to rhythm section, Alto 1/Trombone 1/Trumpet 1 aligned more or less down the middle
- Plenty of options for “non-traditional” jazz instruments; many publishers have flutes double trumpets, horns double trombone, tuba double bass (clarinets not consistent)

Literature selection

- Start with the end in mind- when are my performances and what do I want my students to perform over the course of a year?
- Typical challenges for younger players: off-beat and independent entrances, extended ranges, “crunchy”/harmonic tones in 2nd/3rd parts (especially brass)

Make sure...

- I am considering set-up and equipment
- I am making and listening to rehearsal recordings regularly
- My students are regularly listening to jazz!
- Improvisation *and* working on literature are incorporated into my rehearsal

Pedagogy

- Be thoughtful about your warm-up and incorporate fundamentals for your wind players
- Be systematic and consistent about teaching rhythm and articulation
- Remember the "hierarchy of needs" and responsibilities for rhythm section members
 - Published rhythm section parts aren't the gospel, but they're a good starting point (especially for directors with limited expertise)

Program structure: things to consider

- When and where is/are my ensemble(s) meeting?
- How am I doing auditions and/or recruiting?
- Where are we performing?
- What kind of culture do I want to build? How do I encourage that?

Personal and professional growth

- Find mentors you can trust, and lean on them- it's always OK to ask for help!
- Consider sessions at PD conferences and graduate classes you can take

George Andrikokus is the director of bands and instrumental jazz programs at Hinsdale Middle School. After graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Education from Elmhurst College in 2007, he taught in Addison School District #4 (2007-2013), in Bensenville School District #2 (2013-2016), and was the director of the Youth Jazz Ensemble of DuPage (2012-2015). Under his leadership, George's students have had the opportunity to perform at contests and festivals throughout the Midwest such as the Illinois Music Education Conference (2019 & 2025), The Jazz Education Network Conference, The Greater St. Louis UMSL Jazz Festival, and the 77th Annual Midwest Clinic in December 2023. In 2013, George received the Quinlan & Fabish Chicagoland Outstanding Music Educator Award and the IGSMBA Barbara Buehlman Young Conductor's Award, and was a recipient of the 2024 Illinois State Board of Education "Those Who Excel Meritorious Award." He now serves as the Vice President of the Illinois Grade School Music Association and has his master's degree in Teacher Leadership from Elmhurst College (2020). In his professional career, George is an active clinician, adjudicator, saxophonist, and guest artist in and around Illinois for various district and state honors ensembles. He has had the opportunity to not only perform and teach in and around the Midwest but also in Australia, England, and Malta. George has performed with jazz greats such as Bobby Shew, Jim Widner, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Gary Smulyan and is a member of the National Band Association, Jazz Education Network, Illinois Music Education Association, and the National Association for Music Education. E-mail him at <gandrikokus@d181.org>.

José Antonio Diaz is the founder/artistic director for the award-winning organization Diaz Music Institute in Houston, Texas and its premiere ensemble, Caliente. Honored as a Texas UIL Sponsor of Excellence and Country Music Association Foundation's Music Teacher of Excellence, Diaz is a 2017 Grammy Nominated Music Educator Top 10 finalist, winner of Berklee College of Music's John LaPorta Jazz Educator of the Year Award, LULAC Educator of the Year Award, and recipient of the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award and was recently featured in The National Endowment for the Arts' *American Artscape* magazine. Inducted into *DownBeat* magazine's Jazz Education Hall of Fame, Diaz was also inducted into the Texas Christian University Band Hall of Fame and received the prestigious Jefferson Award for his work with Diaz Music Institute. He has won the Houston Arts Alliance 2020 Support for Artists and Individual Creatives Grant six times. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities selected Diaz Music Institute as a finalist for the 2010 and 2011 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards. As an artist, José has received four grants from the Houston Arts Alliance to support his creative writing in Latin, jazz, and contemporary music compositions. Diaz recently served as the vocal recording engineer for Mister G and José V's "Ritmo Y Rima" and the Global Citizen Ensemble's "Children of the World" albums. Diaz is also co-author of *Middle School Music Expressions™* (Alfred Music Publication) and composed the music for Freddie the Frog and the Invisible Coquí (Mystic Publishing, Inc.), which won *Creative Child* magazine's 2016 Book of the Year. José has performed with such artists as Carl Allen, Ndugu Chancler, Jon Faddis, Conrad Herwig, Brian Lynch, Danilo Perez, Patrice Rushen, David Sanchez, Arturo Sandoval, Nestor Torres, Bill Watrous, and Miguel Zenon. His jazz ensembles have performed multiple times at some of the most prestigious international events, and he has presented workshops around the world. He serves on the board of Directors for The Midwest Clinic and currently as President of the Jazz Education Network. Visit <<https://www.joseantoniodyaz.com>>; e-mail <joseantoniodyaz@mac.com>.

J. Richard Dunscomb was one of the leading authorities in the field of jazz music and music education, recognized nationally and internationally as a guest conductor, author, adjudicator, clinician, and consultant. He was the North American coordinator for the Montreux (Switzerland) International Jazz Festival for 18 years, had served as the Executive Director of the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, served on the Board of Advisors for the Chicago Jazz Institute, and was the Vice President of the Board of Directors for the Midwest Clinic. Dick was the recipient of numerous awards including the Midwest Clinic's Medal of Honor, the Elkhart Jazz Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award, and various awards from several universities for his outstanding conducting, teaching, and service. He was elected into the International Association of Jazz Educators' Hall of Fame in 1992. Through his work with IAJE, Warner Brothers

Music, Alfred/Belwin Jazz Music and other agencies, Richard Dunscomb had presented more than 200 workshops (including conducting and jazz clinics) throughout the United States and in Australia, Europe, Canada, Sweden, Japan, and South America. His most recent publications include, with Dr. Willie Hill, Jr., *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide*, a publication designed to provide a foundation and structure to plan and implement a successful jazz program. Most recently he created [Jazz Zone...The Beginning](#), a lesson-plan based jazz curriculum that includes online resources and four complete big band jazz charts, and [Jazz Zone Together](#), a series of interviews (accessible at no charge) with nearly 80 jazz artists/educators sharing arts, music and jazz information, their stories and tips. Dick passed away November 12, 2025 but had provided not only the inspiration for this Track but also a page of recommendations within this handout. We mourn our loss while celebrating his life.

Antonio J. García is a performer, composer/arranger, producer, clinician, educator, and author in both instrumental and vocal genres and a 2023 recipient of The Midwest Clinic's Medal of Honor. A Professor Emeritus and the former Director of Jazz Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, his newest book, *Jazz Improvisation: Practical Approaches to Grading* (Meredith Music), explores avenues for creating structures that correspond to course objectives. His *Cutting the Changes: Jazz Improvisation via Key Centers* (Kjos Music) offers musicians of all ages the opportunity to improvise over standard tunes using just their major scales. He has performed as trombonist, bass trombonist, or pianist with 70 major artists including Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing, Mel Tormé, Billy Eckstine, Doc Severinsen, Louie Bellson, Dave Brubeck, and Phil Collins. A Conn Selmer clinician/soloist and avid scat-singer, he is Past Associate Jazz Editor for the *International Trombone Association Journal*, Past Editor of the International Association for Jazz Education *Jazz Education Journal*, Past President of IAJE-IL, Board Secretary of The Midwest Clinic, Past Advisory Board Member of the Brubeck Institute, is Co-Editor/Contributing Author of *Teaching Jazz: A Course of Study*, and authored a chapter within *Rehearsing The Jazz Band* and *The Jazzer's Cookbook*. He is the only individual to have directed all three genres of Illinois All-State jazz ensembles: combo, vocal jazz choir, and big band (plus All-County and community concert bands and orchestras). He served as a Network Expert (for Improvisation Materials) for the Jazz Education Network. His articles have been widely published; and his compositions have been published by Kjos, Hal Leonard, Kendor, Doug Beach, ejazzlines, Walrus, UNC Jazz Press, Three-Two Music, Potenza Music, and his own company. García is also the subject of an extensive interview within *Bonanza: Insights and Wisdom from Professional Jazz Trombonists* (Advance Music). He currently resides in his native New Orleans. Visit his web site at <https://www.garciamusic.com>; e-mail ajgarcia@vcu.edu.

Matthew Johnson has taught for over 15 years, including the last 10 at James Hart Junior High School in Homewood, IL, where he directs the James Hart Symphonic Band and Jazz Bands, instructs general music courses, and assists with the 5th and 6th grade bands. Prior to returning to Illinois, Johnson taught for six years in several communities across northern Ohio, including serving as band director and music department coordinator for the Nordon Hills City School District (2013-16). During his tenure at James Hart, the jazz program has seen significant growth, both in the number of participating students (resulting in the creation of a second jazz ensemble) and in its performances at regional festivals and events around the community. Ensembles under his direction have performed at Lucas Oil Stadium, Severance Hall, Wentz Concert Hall, as an opening group for the Brass Tracks Jazz Orchestra and Shout Section Big Band, and have consistently received Superior and Excellent ratings at IGSMA, OMEA, and Bands of America-adjudicated events at the district, state, and national levels. Johnson was a 2023 recipient of the Quinlan & Fabish Chicagoland Outstanding Music Educator Award and has presented clinics on a range of topics at the Illinois Music Education Conference, the Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) State Convention, and The Midwest Clinic. He has served as a middle and high school adjudicator for OMEA, IGSMA, and numerous Chicagoland school districts as well as in several leadership roles for ILMEA and Homewood School District 153. He holds a B.M.E. from the University of Illinois and an M.A. from The Ohio State University. E-mail him at matthew.johnson@hsd153.org.

Don Zentz has taught instrumental music at all levels in education over the past four decades. He served for many years as the Director of Jazz Studies and on the band faculty at the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville, Florida, previously teaching at the University of North Florida, Valdosta State University, and Florida Community College at Jacksonville. Don has long been recognized as a leader in jazz education since being hired onto the UNF jazz faculty by program founder Rich Matteson in 1990. Don's jazz ensembles have performed at national and international stages across the U.S. and Europe, his high school and collegiate jazz ensembles receiving *DownBeat* Student Music Awards. Don enjoys much activity as a clinician, adjudicator, and performer in both jazz and other idioms. He has directed the All-State Jazz Bands of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Maine, and the Delaware All-State Symphonic Band, serves on the Jazz Committee of the Florida Bandmasters Association, and leads jazz band adjudicator recertification sessions. For over twenty years, Don was a per-service saxophonist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra; he remains a top-call player throughout the southeastern United States and has been a Keilwerth Saxophones performing artist since 1995. He served two terms as president of the Florida Unit of IAJE and was responsible for creating and implementing a State Jazz Workshop. UNF named Don an Outstanding Professor in 1996; *DownBeat* Magazine awarded him their Jazz Education Achievement Award in 1999; he received the 2024 John LaPorta Jazz Educator Award from the Jazz Education Network; and he joined a select group of Jacksonville area jazz legends by being inducted into the Jacksonville Jazz Festival Hall of Fame in 2022. That year the National Jazz Festival selected Don as their Jazz Educator of the Year in recognition of his professional standard of excellence, expertise, and a career centered on student achievement at the highest level. Don is a member of Phi Beta Mu, an honorary fraternity for band directors. Visit <<https://www.zentz.org>>; e-mail <donzentz@gmail.com>.