

# Building Musicianship Through Fundamentals: Keys for Sustained Success in Title I Schools

-Shane Goforth, Director of Bands, North Shore Senior High-

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## Why Fundamentals?

- They develop the processes and procedures that make our students successful in everything that they do.
  - Why focused processes and procedures are so important to Title I students.
- They teach and train our students how to recognize and perform the 6 Elements of Musicianship in a logical, purposeful, repeatable, retainable, and process driven manner.
  - The 6 Elements of Musicianship
    1. Tone Quality and Pitch Center
    2. Timing
    3. Balance/Voice or Line Priority
    4. Phrase Shape or Musical Direction
    5. Technique
    6. Style
  - All of the generally accepted fundamental cannon target these musical elements, yet I seldom hear fundamental exercises referred to or spoken about in musical ways. The perception that an individual or ensemble works differently to prepare a musical phrase in a piece of literature than they do when they prepare a fundamental exercise is a fallacy that retards and/or inhibits success in monumental ways.

## The perceived separation of Fundamentals and Musicianship

- I did not see significant improvement in my bands early in my career because the “fundamentals” we played had no purpose or focus. They had no focus because I had bought into the erroneous concept that there existed a separation between fundamentals and musicianship. First of all, I didn’t see the exercises as the foundational pillars of advanced musical performance that they are, I instead saw them as a warm up. More importantly, I did not fully understand that the exercises were designed by master pedagogues and performers to develop superior musical skills in both themselves and their students. I did not realize that the pursuit and perfection of these exercises would enable my ensembles to have the moving, musical performances that I had always dreamed of.

## Purposeful Speak = Purposeful Work = Wonderful Performances

### Tone Quality and Pitch Center

- You must be obsessed with tone quality and pitch center.
  - Tone quality is our musical voice; at least half of our musical identity and arguably much more than that. It is the first and the only continuous expression of our musical soul.
  - The Baylor University Wind Ensemble performance of Colonial Song at the 2016 TMEA Convention:
    - The final solo statement of the melody is written in the cornet at m56. When the young lady chosen to play the solo brought her horn to her lips and started to play it was like God had decided to speak to us. It was as if Grainger’s whole compositional heart and his love for folk music was being poured out in just the first 2 notes. You could hear the countless hours of effort and energy that were devoted to her craft over many years all expressed with beauty and passion in just the first note. 2 and 1/2 bars into the phrase, where the melody moves across the partial, the poor young lady missed the written D and had some issues thereafter. I’ll forget the mistake, but I’ll always remember how I was moved by her remarkable tone.
  - Perform everything, every exercise, every phrase beautifully.

## Building the Musical Phrase from Tone Quality to Technique EVERYDAY at Every Rehearsal

1. Be incredibly detailed and hold the highest level of expectation for your students' performance of the fundamental exercises.
2. Use a consistent count structure (I suggest 2 and 8) from breathing through articulation/technique, to build a logical musical phrase.
3. Work diligently and obsessively to not omit any element of the musical phrase.
  - You can combine elements in a single exercise, but focus on one element at a time.
  - "Continue to talk about the important things and they will get better." Greg Countryman.
  - The things that we prioritize, think about and talk about are the things that our students will prioritize, think and talk about. If you prioritize the musical phrase your students WILL become more musical players.
4. Divide the ensemble into subgroups so that you and the players can accurately hear the level of performance/achievement. Here are some groupings that we use frequently.
  - Brass/Woodwinds
  - High Brass/Low Brass, Low Reeds/Upper Woodwinds
  - By Section
  - Section Leaders/Full Band
  - Weaker parts (especially in marching band rehearsal): 2nd Horn, 3rd Trombone and Tenor Sax together then Full Band etc.
  - Group for balance purposes. Bass Clarinet and Bassoon then the full ensemble. This allows the ensemble to hear the low reed color many desire in their ensembles and then listen for it when the full ensemble plays.
  - Be creative with your combinations to suit your musical situations.
5. Most importantly always remember, "We are what repeatedly do; excellence then is not an act but a habit."- Aristotle
  - If you build focused, beautiful, detailed musical phrases in your fundamentals everyday then YOU WILL find your students playing beautiful, musical phrases in your ensembles.

### A. Breathing

- Breathing to focus
  - Your students are coming from the hallway or the outside world to your rehearsal. You must still their bodies and quiet their minds if you want them to execute musically and retain the very detailed information that you will provide in the rehearsal. Establishing or improving your ensemble's musical focus is far and away the most important tool to accelerate their growth.
- Breathing as a technique
  - Mouth open. No restriction to the air flow in or out.
  - Think open & relaxed, Breathe to the floor/seat, Feel the back expand
  - 4 In/4 Out, 3/3, 2/2, 1/1
- Breathing for the musical phrase
  - 2 In/8 Out, 2/4, 1/8, 1/4
  - Use other count structures as the kids get more advanced that fit the musical structures and phrases that you are working on or plan to work on.
  - We always start the breathing exercises at 82bpm but we will increase the tempo for the second half of the exercises to match musical requirements and work on breathing for those phrases. When you increase tempos, be vigilant in your observation of the students to ensure that they stay open and relaxed. 4 In/16 Out at 164bpm should look the same as 2/8 at 82bpm but you'll find that it doesn't. The accelerated tempo will create stress and tension in the students. If you want them to take a relaxed, musical breath at that tempo then I suggest you work on it in a fundamental process.
  - **We believe in the 2 beat breath** and use it for almost everything we do. I encourage you to standardize your breath and to be tenacious about the students taking a quality musical breath for the given phrase **every time that they play**.

### B. Audiation and Ear Training

- We Sing/Buzz/Play **everything** that we do. It is vitally important to train our students to be **musicians** and not just **instrumental technicians**.

- Humming and Singing
- Buzzing
  - Make sure that you are setting things up in an environment where you can hear both the accuracy and quality of the students' singing and buzzing.
  - The air should move free and relaxed through the lips with no "free buzz" and the lip vibration should occur when the mouthpiece is placed on the embouchure.
- Use of the Harmony Director
- Use of tuners and Tonal Energy
  - Exercise- Hum to Ah 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**)
  - We perform our long tones at 82bpm

### C. Long Tones

- Long tones are just the next step in building the musical phrase and the first ensemble sound that we make on the instrument is F Concert. The Exercise that we use to start our long tone series is F Concert 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**) as we move through our natural musical progression of breathe, sing, buzz and play.
  - You can (and must) evaluate all 6 musical criteria through this exercise.
    1. Tone Quality & Pitch Center
      - Is the sound smooth and even?
      - Is it free of noise?
      - Does the pitch produced match the drone, example, other players?
    2. Timing
      - Do the students initiate sound exactly with each other, the metronome, your baton?
      - Do they have an accurate, energetic release? (When I hear groups play fundamentals the initiation of the sound is often prioritized and the release neglected.)
    3. Balance/Voice Priority
      - Can you hear all of the instruments equally or in the proportions that you want?
      - Can you hear every member of the section equally? (The importance of equal individual contribution can not be overstated and must not be ignored.)
      - Are the students listening to the people or sections that you have asked them to? (Training students to listen, match and balance to reference voices will change your ensemble's musical life forever.)
    4. Phrase Shape/Musical Direction
      - You can absolutely hear musical direction in this 8 beat phrase.
      - Is the air stream/tone quality warm and vibrant all the way to the release?
    5. Technique
      - Are all of the students sitting or standing correctly? Are they holding their instruments correctly? Are their bodies, arms, hands and faces relaxed and free of tension? Do their embouchures look correct?
      - Most people consider technique to be fast playing, difficult intervals, etc. and those things will and must be developed in our fundamental process, but we will never be consistently successful in our "fast or difficult" passages until the answers to the above are yes.
    6. Style
      - Do we start the sound with the same articulation?
      - Does the air energy and dynamic match after the articulation?
      - Does the air increase, decrease or stay the same into the release?
  - You must obsess about tone quality and be incredibly detailed when working on your long tone exercises. If you are musical, positively intense, detailed and determined with your comments to your students about the performance and progress of their long tones **THEY WILL NOT BE BORED OR LOSE INTEREST!**
  - Students tire of playing one note, but I find they never tire of making music.
- **The North Shore Senior High Long Tone Series**
  1. Concert F- 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**)
  2. F Descending (**Ex. 2**)
  3. Flow Studies 1-6 (**Ex. 3**)

- These first three long tone exercises combined with our breathing, singing and buzzing are the essential and non-negotiable foundation of everything we do. They gradually and logically build the musical phrase step-by-step from the breath and a single pitch to advanced intervals over a wide portion of the instruments' normal range.
4. F Remington (**Ex. 4**)
  5. Bb Remington (**Ex. 5**)
    - Shown only in one octave, we actually will play the Bb Remington in 2 octaves for both a Low and High Remington.
  6. Combined Remingtons
    - Once air, tone quality and pitch are established on the Remington exercises individually, combine them for open 5th tuning when playing the Low Bb Remington and open 4th tuning when playing the High Bb Tuning.

#### D. Lip Slurs

- Lips slurs are an essential part of building tone quality and flexibility but are the most musically abused fundamental of all. When I hear groups that are doing some good long tone work, often there is an entirely different focus when it comes to their lip slurs. The tone quality completely changes; the transitions are not smooth or in time. The dynamic value of the pitches varies greatly and the consideration of intonation goes out the window. The result is the opposite of a beautiful, musical phrase.
  - All of our phrases have started on Concert F, so pick a Lip Slur that begins on Concert F (**Ex. 11**)
  - I recommend starting with a very simple Lip Slur that begins with a descending interval so the brass continue to play into relaxation and not tension. (**Ex. 11**)
  - Demand the same musical breath and initiation of sound (accuracy of articulation and centered, resonant tone quality) that have been on all of your long tones.
  - Develop a musical breathing plan for your Lip Slurs just as you would for a musical phrase. In Ex. 11 you might start by turning m2 into a whole note, breathing every other series and timing the breath on beat 4 in m4. Be creative, but make sure that all the students understand the plan and that it is important to you.
    - To achieve a quality musical phrase, ensure that the students can sing the pitches accurately. With the larger intervals and range this is a challenge for all students. To accomplish this, play the pitches for the students on a Yamaha Harmony Director or other tone generator.
    - Have the Woodwinds play the Lip Slur and the Brass buzz. Again, always make sure that you can hear the pitch and quality that the students are buzzing. To insure that you can hear all of the brass players buzz have just one woodwind section, small groups of players or individuals play.
  - Our base tempo for lip slurs is 100bpm. After a slur is firmly established with a group, we will sometimes begin to modify the tempo, dynamic and phrase shape of the exercise to develop the students' musical abilities based on the literature that we are performing.

#### E. Articulation

- Articulation serves two purposes. It's "fundamental" purpose is to allow the air to initiate sound at the desired speed for sustained resonance. It's musical purpose is to establish the style that the note will be played.
- Establish a uniform set of syllables for Brass Articulation and Woodwind Articulation.
  - North Shore Brass Syllables
    1. Legato- Lu
    2. Long Lifted- Do
    3. Marcato- Da
    4. Staccato- De
      - We only use a Ti or Ta tongue in special situations where an incredibly firm tongue is necessary.
  - North Shore Woodwind Syllables
    1. Legato- Do
    2. Long Lifted- Da
    3. Marcato- De
    4. Staccato- Di(t)
      - We sometimes use a T based articulation syllable with Flutes if needed, but I would caution you against ever using a T syllable with any reed instrument.

- My aversion to the T based articulation syllable.
  - In my experience, I find that students have a greater tendency to stop the movement of air when using a T syllable for articulation and the greatest enemy to good tone production and the flow of a musical phrase is the stoppage of air behind the tongue. There are groups that certainly use the T syllable successfully, but if you are experiencing difficulty developing the tone quality that you desire for your group, I would examine the articulation syllable.
- We always start our articulation series with legato and work to staccato. Again, this encourages open air flow with no restriction from the tongue and we are always talking about hearing and moving air to the conclusion of the musical phrase.
- The North Shore Senior High Articulation Series
  - We start almost all of our articulation exercises with a “long tone” because I want the students to establish great air flow and tone quality, but it’s also incredibly valuable in that it forces them to start the articulation from an “open” position with the tongue down.
  - Open vs. Closed Articulation Position- After air flow, starting with the tongue up and against the teeth (closed) is the primary cause of poor or inconsistent initiation of quality tone. Talk to your students regularly about starting open and bringing the tongue down when discussing articulation.
    1. The Base Exercise (**Ex. 6**)- Whole/quarters, whole/eighths, whole/triplets, whole/sixteenths
      - In it’s basic form we play this exercise at 100bpm. This tempo allows the students to single tongue the entire exercise.
      - We start the exercise on F Concert
      - We always start the articulation series with a legato syllable and then move through long lifted, marcato to end with staccato.
      - We work to ensure that the air moves smoothly and does not change when transitioning from the whole note to the articulated pitches.
  - After establishing this exercise, I **strenuously encourage** you to then modify it to assist you in establishing the musical phrases found in your performance literature.

**Here is the way that we modified the exercise to establish the sound and phrase that we wanted on the first brass phrase of this year’s marching show.**

- Our target tempo was 156bpm so we started to increase the tempo slowly from 100bpm. When you reach 120bpm you have to make a decision about the sixteenth note portion of the exercise because it begins to require the students to use a double tongue. We decided to drop the triplets and sixteenths because our focus was on obtaining orchestral brass articulation on quarter, eighths and dotted eighth/ sixteenth rhythms in advanced ranges at very high dynamic value. (**Ex. 7**) We added a dotted eighth/ sixteenth pattern after the quarters and eighths were well established to help detail a phrase later in the show.
- We began to divide the group into simple harmonic structures with which they were most familiar to play the exercise and then advanced those structures in a logical fashion until the exercise mirrored the opening phrase. (**See examples 8-10**) In example 10, all the players were playing the exercise on the first note of the opening fortissimo phrase.
- We also increased the dynamic level with each layer of harmony that we added, again to build into a musical performance of the first phrase.
- When we finished the exercise I would have the student play the first phrase of the show. If there were issues with timing or articulation, we would go back to the appropriate level of the exercise, isolate the problem and then work back into the phrase.
  2. Moving Articulation through Pitch Transitions. Combining Fundamental Exercises.
    - After establishing an acceptable level of articulation on a single pitch, move the articulation through pitch changes by combining the articulation exercise with an already established long tone exercise.

- I like to start with a Descending F Remington exercise because it starts with small intervals and returns to Concert F. F Descending and F Ascending are also good options.
  - We continue to start these articulations with a whole note but often shorten it to a half note depending on the tempo, articulation pattern or phrase that we are working on. This does many things, but mainly allows both the students and the staff to hear the quality and centeredness of the pitch/tone quality through the transition and articulation.
- As directors it is crucial that we have the same highly detailed level of expectation regarding our 6 musical criteria on the articulation exercises that we did with the long tone exercises. Continue to ask yourself those same musical questions and develop additional questions pertinent to your current musical environment.

## F. Technique

- We work breathing, air production and long tone technique in rehearsal because we feel like most kids aren't likely to work on these things in their personal practice, but if you think that a majority of your kids will work on technique at a level necessary for you to achieve your goals without your guidance you are probably destined to be eternally frustrated.
- To play Technique Exercises musically, start with something attainable by the players. We start with Chromatic 8th Note Mini-Scales (**Ex. 12**) as slow as necessary to ensure correct notes, chromatic fingerings and **EVEN FINGERS**.
- Give direction to the air. Have the students crescendo gradually to the end of the whole note.
- Develop a breathing plan where the students take a musically appropriate breath in each phrase. For example: Breathe after every other whole note / Divide students into 3 groups and space their breaths through the phrase so there is never a break in the sound.
- Increase the tempo of simple exercises to build consistent execution. We take the Chromatic 8th Note Mini-Scales (**Ex. 12**) starting at 100bpm and increase by 10bpm until we reach 200bpm. Then we switch to the Chromatic 16th Note Mini-Scales (**Ex. 13**) at 100bpm and advance the tempo slowly to 160bpm.
- We also use Mini-Scales, Ascending and Descending 1 octave scales, Arpeggios, 3rd's, Full Range Scales and Clarke Studies utilizing the same techniques listed above with the chromatic exercises.
- As with all of the fundamental exercises, remind the students to breathe for the phrase and don't be satisfied with a phrase that is not better than their last repetition.

## G. The Chorale

- The chorale is where most directors start to think musically. I challenge you to make the chorale the logical conclusion to a process where musicality is always the goal.
  - Select a chorale that is easily attainable from a technical perspective, is in a reasonable key and is written in four parts.
  - Work to ensure that every student can sing and/or buzz their part with accurate timing, intonation and smooth transitions.
  - Make sure that everyone knows what part they are playing; Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass.
  - **Clearly define the phrase shape for the students and assign breathing or discuss musical breathing options.**
  - Play the voice parts individually, in pairs and trios. Again, sing/buzz/play the parts in these groups.
  - When playing two parts at a time, look for consonant intervals to tune. For example in our chorale (**Ex. 14**) when the Bass and Alto lines play together, the intervals in the first phrase are; 5th, 5th, Octave, 5th, Octave, 5th, Octave, 5th (Octave displacement aside, we don't talk about 13ths because they sound like a 5th to the kids.) What a great tuning exercise.
    1. Hold one note at a time so students can listen and tune.
    2. Play every pitch as a whole note with four beats of rest in between. Add a drone playing the two pitches in the rest for the students to match.
  - Build the chords Root/5th/3rd as shown at the beginning of the chorale (**Ex. 14**)

# Fundamental Routine

## North Shore Senior High Band

MIDWEST 2017

①

①

② **F Descending**

②

③ **Flow Study Series 1-All Slurred**

F.S. 2

③

F.S. 3

F.S. 4

③

F.S. 5

③

F.S. 6

③

④ **F Remington**

④

**F Remington Intervals**

④

④

⑤ **Bb Remington**

⑤

2  
721 **Bb Remington Intervals**

Musical notation for Bb Remington Intervals, measures 721-726. Treble and bass staves with various interval exercises.

127  
127

Musical notation for Bb Remington Intervals, measures 127-132. Treble and bass staves with various interval exercises.

6 **Articulation Series**

Flute  
Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

136  
Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

Musical notation for Articulation Series, measures 136-142. Treble and bass staves with articulation exercises for various instruments.

143  
143

Musical notation for Articulation Series, measures 143-148. Treble and bass staves with articulation exercises for various instruments.

7 **Building to Phrase Step 1**

Flute  
Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

149  
Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

Musical notation for Building to Phrase Step 1, measures 149-154. Treble and bass staves with phrase building exercises.

8 **Building to Phrase Step 2**

Flute  
1st Trumpet  
2nd and 3rd Trumpet, and Horn

155  
Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

Musical notation for Building to Phrase Step 2, measures 155-160. Treble and bass staves with phrase building exercises.

9 **Building to Phrase Step 3**

Flute, 1st Trumpet, Clarinet  
2nd and 3rd Tpt

161  
Trombone  
Euphonium

Tuba

Musical notation for Building to Phrase Step 3, measures 161-166. Treble and bass staves with phrase building exercises.

10 **Building to Phrase Step 4**

Flute, 1st Trumpet, Clarinet  
2nd Tpt  
3rd Tpt  
Horn

C Minor  
167  
1st Trombone  
2nd Trombone  
Euphonium

Tuba

Musical notation for Building to Phrase Step 4, measures 167-172. Treble and bass staves with phrase building exercises in C Minor.

11 **Lip Slurs**

173

Musical notation for Lip Slurs, measures 173-178. Treble and bass staves with lip slur exercises.

179

Musical notation for Lip Slurs, measures 179-184. Treble and bass staves with lip slur exercises.



12

Woodwinds

Woodwinds part for measures 188-192. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

188

Brass

Brass part for measures 188-192. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

193

Woodwinds part for measures 193-198. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

193

Brass part for measures 193-198. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

199

Woodwinds part for measures 199-204. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

199

Brass part for measures 199-204. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

203

Woodwinds part for measures 203-208. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

203

Brass part for measures 203-208. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

207

Woodwinds part for measures 207-212. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

207

Brass part for measures 207-212. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

211

Woodwinds part for measures 211-216. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

211

Brass part for measures 211-216. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

214

Woodwinds part for measures 214-219. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

214

Brass part for measures 214-219. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

225

Brass part for measures 225-229. The staff shows a bass line with sustained notes and some movement.

225

14

Doxology Chorale

Doxology Chorale part for measures 218-224. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

218

Doxology Chorale part for measures 225-231. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

225

Doxology Chorale part for measures 232-238. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

225

Doxology Chorale part for measures 239-245. The staff shows a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

225