

# Let's Get ORGANIZED!

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This session will provide practical guides on how to make positive changes in your work habits to optimize your mental energy. Improve your self-management skills by setting up Simple, Effective Systems in your program. By creating efficient, effective planning and teaching spaces, you will clear up your mental space and make your work day much more manageable.

## WHY IS BEING ORGANIZED IMPORTANT?

Music Educators are almost always overwhelmed with score study, lesson plans, event planning, trip coordinating, equipment managing, day-to-day operations....and that's just scratching the surface. Overwhelm leads to "Survival Mode" which can create habits that aren't always long-term effective solutions. If you create \*Simple, Effective Systems for your mental space, planning space, and teaching space, you can focus more attention on *actually* teaching, and go home and *be home* at the end of the day.

\*Simple, Effective Systems are the habits you put in place to make each element of your work day as predictable and functional as possible.

## Teaching Space Organization:

SCENARIO: Students are coming in the room at the beginning of class

Student 1: I left my book in my locker, can I go get it?

Student 2: I lost my scale sheet. Can I have another copy?

Student 3: This screw came loose. Can you fix it?

BUT WHAT IF hall passes, copies, and screwdrivers are all in different locations in your room? Or worse, what if you don't immediately know where all of these things are? Suddenly you are spending more time fixing small issues (that add up quickly) rather than teaching the full group.

## Planning Space Organization:

SCENARIO: You are in your planning period trying to get work done between classes

Action Item 1: Answer Emails

Action Item 2: Deliver signed invoices to your bookkeeper

Action Item.....Wait, I just got an important email.

Wait, I forgot to make copies for 6th grade

Wait, here's another email

Wait, I've got a package in the front office.....

YOUR PLANNING TIME IS PRECIOUS, so develop routines that help you get all of your priorities done on a daily basis without getting too distracted by the day's unexpected events and influx of emails. If your planning space and routine is organized, it makes your planning time so much more efficient.

## **ORGANIZE YOUR MENTAL SPACE**

### **CALENDARS - Planning the Year:**

- I Start with a Month-by-Month Hard Copy Calendar
  - Write out all County major events
    - Teacher Work Days, Holidays
    - Grading Periods
  - Write out all School major events
    - Testing, Sporting events, etc.)
  - Write out your District's major events
    - All State Auditions, District/State Events, Evaluations, District Meetings, etc.
  - Write out Major events for your Feeder Schools/High School
    - Their concerts, competitions, etc.
    - Avoid parent conflicts, chances are they have siblings in both programs
  - Write out Your Program's Major Events
    - Concerts, Competitions, Fundraisers, After School Rehearsals
    - Use the Grading Periods to inform when your major playing tests will be
  - Fill in the gaps!
    - Now you have a very clear structure to the year for you to fit in all your lesson plans
    - Not so intimidating to plan out an entire year when you only have to plan "chunk by chunk"
- Move hard copy notes to digital calendaring
  - Your school may already have a calendar that you can sync to with all school events already on it
  - Put All Major Events on your digital calendar and include reminders as you see fit

### **CALENDARS - Planning the Week:**

- Now that you have your "big picture" in place, you can fill in the small details for the month/week
- Use a chart to track what you will do each week
  - You can see all grade levels/ensembles on one sheet
  - Write down announcements ahead of time so you don't forget to tell students important things
    - Example: In the Monday Announcements, tell yourself to remind the students about Thursday's after school practice
- Shareable with other directors so Everyone is on the same page
  - Helps avoid last minute planning for all directors/miscommunication
- Keep a computer in the Front of your Room so you can quickly access the Plan for the Week. This allows for everyone to see any last minute changes to the plan and if another director had to step in to teach class they already know the plan without even speaking with other directors.

# **ORGANIZE YOUR MENTAL SPACE**

## **EMAILS - What Do I Do With Them All??**

**Empty Your Inbox Daily** (or as close to daily as possible)

YES, IT CAN BE DONE.

**Answer emails within 24 hours**

Administrators and Parents WILL NOTICE and be very appreciative.

This also respects YOUR time and keeps your mind empty of old business and ready to move on to new business.

**Do Not Answer Emails Outside of Work Hours**

Respect your time. It can wait.

Recommend: CHECK email if you feel it's necessary, but don't ANSWER/ACTION if it isn't time sensitive

**Leave it Unread on Purpose**

Can't get to an email yet or it's after work hours? Leave it unread! If you have a habit of getting your inbox to zero, then you know you will get to it within the 24-hour mark

Unread Emails are very easy-to-track action items

**Unread Emails Shouldn't Make it to the "Next Page"**

Gmail keeps about 50 emails on the first page. The goal is to get the emails read *and addressed* before you end up with enough emails to move it to the second page.

OKAY THAT'S GREAT AND EVERYTHING, BUT HOW DO I ACHIEVE THIS??

Every Email Check (could be several times during work day), do a Sifting Process:

1. Immediate "deletes"
  - a. And *actually* delete them. This creates immediate mental clarity for a full inbox.
2. Need to Reply NOW items:
  - a. NOW Emails require response within the hour.
3. Need to be opened, but don't require a reply
  - a. Open them quickly, make note of anything important
  - b. Example: Student being pulled from class to make up a test
4. Short reply emails
  - a. Require a reply, but not a time-consuming action
  - b. Example: "Can you remind Student to be a car rider today?"

Note: Create an effective reminder system for yourself so you can quickly reply "yes!" and then trust yourself to actually remember.
5. Long reply emails/need to acquire more information before responding:
  - a. These can be done after you've handled all the other categories (clears more mental space to focus on these important items)

Check email throughout the day to stay caught up with the Sifting Process and get the inbox to zero (or as close to zero as possible) before you leave for the day.

**Anything left unread should be a top priority action item the morning of the next business day.**

## **ORGANIZE YOUR MENTAL SPACE**

### **ORGANIZING TO-DO'S - How do you keep track of it all?**

Step 1: Create One Long To-Do List based on each of your major events

Each concert gets its own list, each fundraiser gets its own list, etc.

Step 2: Prioritize the One Long To-Do List

Figure out which items have to be done first, broken up into smaller pieces, etc.

Step 3: CALENDAR your to-dos.

Make it difficult for your Future Self to miss a deadline by getting your Past Self to write them all in your planner/calendar

EXAMPLE: March = Evaluated Performance (Festival, LGPE, etc.)

Examples of Action Items:

1. Select Music (broken down into research/listening phase) (WINTER)
2. Order Music (AND extra scores) (WINTER)
3. Input information into OPUS (ASAP/By the deadline)
4. Number Your Measures (Before Pre-Performance Evaluation)
5. Book Buses (at least one month before event)

Put these to-dos ON YOUR CALENDAR and complete before your deadlines

### HOW DO I CALENDAR TO-DOS?

- Digital Calendar Option
  - Input all small to-do deadlines into digital calendar
  - Set to Reminder option and get reminders when all small deadlines are approaching
  - *Personal opinion:* Save digital calendar for major events and major deadlines
    - Ex: Concerts, Registration deadlines, Trips, etc.
    - This helps keep my digital calendar free from unnecessary clutter
- Physical Planner:
  - I keep a hard copy planner open on my desk at all times.
  - When a small to-do needs to be calendared I flip to that month/day and write it in. My planner acts as my day-to-day to-do list

EXAMPLE:

Digital Calendar for May 7th reads: "Spring Concert"

Physical Planner for May 7th Reads:

- "Pack Emergency Bag"
- "Print Programs"
- "Percussion Packing List"

So what happens if you think of a small to-do but you aren't around your physical planner?

Since I have an effective system in place for emails, I can email myself and I know I will get to that email and follow through effectively.

Sticky Notes: Sometimes the classic sticky note on my desk/computer can do the trick.

### **MOST IMPORTANT THING:**

**Find what works for YOU to not miss small deadlines leading up to major events**

## **ORGANIZE YOUR MENTAL SPACE**

GOAL: Allow your "Past Self" (you today) to make work easier for your "Future Self." It's a great feeling to smile and thank your past self for working hard "then" so you can better function in the "now."

### **ROUTINE:**

BEFORE the first day of classes (and before each day after that):

- Think ahead of how you want your morning to go
- Question: How early do you need to arrive to feel good about the day?
- Avoid showing up and "winging it" each day
  - You Can't "Wing" Routine - You BUILD Routine

Example of Detailed Morning Routine:

- Put down bags, put keys somewhere *consistent*
- Take lunch box to fridge
- Check teacher mailbox
- Use the restroom \*\*Don't laugh - you really do need to plan these breaks!\*\*
- Morning Duty
- Knock out top-priority action item emails (especially those left over from yesterday!)

Example of Detailed Planning Routine:

- Check emails at the beginning of planning for anything MAJOR that needs to be done NOW. Don't get caught up in anything small, because more important items should be for the beginning of planning time.
- Tackle priority Action items from Physical Planner
- Eat Lunch (ALWAYS MAKE TIME TO EAT)
- Smaller, easier to-dos that can be done in the last few minutes of planning

Mondays:

- Send out Weekly Reminder/Schedule Reminders each morning to parents/students
- Update your Plan for the Week/Lessons Plans/Whatever you need to TEACH effectively this week  
(oh yeah, we have to teach too???)
- Make sure materials for students/Score Study rehearsal notes are ready to go for each class (bonus points if everything is ready for the entire week!)

Fridays:

- Take care of "Friday Items" (see p. 6)
- Create the detailed plan for next week (if you haven't already done so)
  - "Plan" could mean finalizing lesson plans, organizing to-dos, Score Study, etc.
  - YOU SHOULD ALREADY HAVE A GENERAL IDEA - Fridays are for finalizing and writing out the detailed plan
- Do enough to make you feel good about not doing work on the weekend

**YOU ARE A HUMAN AND YOU NEED YOUR WEEKENDS.**

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, THEN COME IN THE NEXT WEEK AND KNOCK OUT THOSE ACTION ITEMS. WORKING FROM HOME SHOULD BE THE ANOMALY, NOT VICE VERSA.**

## ORGANIZE YOUR PLANNING SPACE

### GOAL:

Find effective ways to keep track of and execute ALL of your needs *and* your students' needs

### DESK CALENDAR and "GROCERY LIST"

#### Desk Calendar or Calendar Kept Near your Desk

- Keep a quick-edit calendar (paper/pencil or marker board) next to your desk
- Use to keep track of weekly items that don't need to go on your planner or digital calendar
  - Example: Meeting during planning, Fire Drill, morning lesson with a student

#### Dry-Erase Board (next to desk, under calendar)

- Friday Items
  - Keep "Friday Items" written on this marker board to remind you to do the same things every Friday to stay on top of things:
    - Update Gradebook/Reward points
    - Student Account Charges
    - To-Be-Ordered Items
    - Tidy Up the Room
    - Next Week's Plan
- "Grocery List"
  - Also on Dry-Erase Board next to desk
    - Track all student account charges and what needs to be ordered
      - Example: Michael needs to be charged \$25 for a box of reeds, write it on the board so I remember to get his account charged AND remember to order the reeds.

**Small Things are SO easy to leave behind as the days go by, but they add up fast and create more Overwhelm. Stay on top of small tasks that feel inconvenient at the moment. Your Future Self will thank you!**

## **ORGANIZE YOUR PLANNING SPACE**

**GOAL:** Increase your planning surface area to avoid things piling up on your desk. Have a system in place so that if you can't find something you can narrow it down to a few places you would have put it. This only works if you are **CONSISTENT** in the Simple, Effective systems you create for yourself

### **FILING CABINET** (Examples of the Tabs I use for the filing cabinet in the band office)

Keep track of EVERYTHING

Top Drawer (most frequently needed accessibility)

- Disciplinary slips (as needed with your school)
- Paid Invoices
- Deposit Receipts
- Approved Purchase Orders
- Cash Collection Forms
- Student Accommodations
- Instrument Rental Information/Return Receipts
- Packing Slips
- Repair Receipts
- County Funding important documents/information

Bottom Drawer (less frequently needed accessibility)

- Hard copies of Band Program Info (handbook, supply list, etc. ready for if/when new students arrive)
- Fundraising documents (brochures, etc.)
- School-specific documents
- Professional Organizations info
- Warranties/Manuals (the "junk drawer" file)

### **DRAWERS/SHELVES**

- All Planning Binders
- Instrument Accessories:
  - Reeds
  - Mouthpieces
  - Cleaning Supplies
- College textbooks
- Medical Bags/Emergency Bag (bottom shelf, packed and ready for trips)
- "To Grade" and "Hand Back" organizers to keep track of grading process
- "This doesn't belong here" box (sorted/reorganized and put away regularly)
- Paper organizers (baskets, files, etc.)

## **ORGANIZE YOUR PLANNING SPACE**

### **BINDERS/PAPERS:**

CLEARLY LABEL SPINES of your Planning Binders. Make them neatly labeled and binders matching color. This will help keep your shelves easy to navigate and look tidy!

- Gradebook:
  - Print rosters for each class and use it as another way to track grades before entering them onto the computer.
    - Make sure to have a quick turnaround time from hand written grades to digitally recorded grades
    - If this is part of your regular "Friday Items" this should not be an issue!
- LGPE Score Sheets
  - Keep track of the score sheets every year at Pre-LGPE and LGPE
    - You will be able to look back and track your program's growth
    - Have a tab for each year
  - Include a pencil pouch where you can place the flashdrive to keep all the recordings of the concerts. Use the same flash drive each year to avoid having to always buy one.
- Trip Planning
  - First time planning a trip keep track of your notes, receipts, itineraries, etc.
    - Makes planning the next year easier so you don't have to remember what you did
    - Also keep track of what you DIDN'T like or ideas for how to improve
- Bus Notebooks
  - Have Bus attendance roster notebooks already made, marked with bus numbers
    - Rosters
    - Trip Schedules
    - Pencil Pouches (so parents don't have to look for something to write with to take attendance)
    - Makes it easier to plan trips when most of the "day-of" items are already ready to go on your shelves! Just print your rosters and go.



## **ORGANIZE YOUR TEACHING SPACE**

### **FRONT OF ROOM:**

- Board:
  - Write the schedule on the board for students to see and know what to expect each day
    - Students love predictability
  - Taped off squares for where all things will be written
    - Announcements
    - Plan for the day
    - Reminders for Yourself
    - Quick Access to Plan for the Week (See “Calendars - Planning the Week”)
- “The Shelf”
  - Big shelf with a section for each grade level
  - Place to keep track of:
    - Where kids turn in work
    - Copies of each grade level’s extra concert music/materials
    - Hard copy schedules/announcements for each grade level
    - Work to be handed back to students
- Instructional Materials:
  - All of YOUR regularly used instructional materials recommend to keep at front podium:
    - Scores
    - Method Books
- Instrument Repair Stations
  - Front of Room:
    - Small container next to front podium with
      - Valve oil
      - Cork Grease
      - Screwdrivers
    - Helpful for fast repairs at the front of the room to keep class moving
  - Main Repair Station (for instruments needing serious repair)
    - Have designated area for students to leave instruments that need repair
    - Keep sticky notes/writing utensils so students can leave notes for repairman
    - Quick-Edit marker board to keep a list of instruments needing repairs (and whether or not the repairs have been completed)
- Office Supplies
  - Tape Dispenser, Stapler, Hole Puncher
    - My band room actually has three of these, labeled for band room, office, music library - that way every corner of the room always has them on hand)
  - Sticky Notes (quick, inevitable hall passes)
  - Pens, Sharpies, Pencils
- “Little Things” Location
  - Always finding screws and tiny things? Have ONE place to put them all! That way if a student is missing a screw, hopefully you can find it in there!
  - “The Littlest Things Can Make the Biggest Difference...So Don’t Lose Them!”

## **ORGANIZE YOUR TEACHING SPACE**

### **BINDERS/PAPERS:**

**GOAL:** To be able to quickly find and access a resource that you know will be helpful for teaching or helpful to quickly give to students when they need it.

- Scores (Keep all “loose” instructional materials in one space)
  - Tabs in a Binder for each grade level's pieces
  - Scores for director-composed warm-ups
  - Seating Charts helpful to keep in this binder too
- Fingering Charts
  - Have extra copies of fingering charts in a binder ready to hand out as needed
  - Have a Master Copy of fingerings charts and have an instructor for each instrument circle all fingerings needed for Chromatic Scales/alternate fingerings. LIFE SAVER
- Scale Sheets
  - Have extra copies of scales in a binder - I have a binder for both Middle School and 11-12 High School Scales.
- District/State Audition Materials:
  - Dedicated place for Hard Copies of this year's Etudes
    - For quick copy replacement AND for director reference while listening to students
  - Extra scales and chromatic scales \*\*See suggestion above for Fingering Charts\*\*
  - Blank Score Sheets for easy/quick Mock Audition preparation
- Concert Music
  - When students lose music you can quickly replace it (extra copies live on “The Shelf”)
- Substitute Plans
  - Have a binder ready for subs for when you need to be out, that way you don't always have to assemble things from scratch each time
    - Rosters
    - Location of Emergency Maps/Plans
    - Plans for each day (or a place for you to write them in)
    - Duty Locations/Planning Times
- Handouts from College, Grad School, GMEA Conferences, Concert Programs.....
  - What do I do with all those hard copy handouts?
    - Keep track of them in binders, file folders, etc.
    - Organize as you go OR before starting first job
  - Create categories in binders and label the spines so you can easily find what you need on the shelf
  - Internet can feel overwhelming, so accessing helpful handouts from your trusted professors and conferences is very helpful
- College Projects
  - **KEEP ALL YOUR WORK - YOU WORKED HARD FOR THOSE PROJECTS**
    - Scores you studied, music history papers, music theory projects, research papers, **ESPECIALLY** Music Education projects

## ORGANIZE YOUR TEACHING SPACE

### “GO” BAG:

- Backpack to contain anything and everything you could need for “Band on the Go”
  - Concerts, Trips, Honor Bands, etc.
  - Avoid having to pack things up for every single event. Bag stays packed and only needs to be checked for restocking.
  - Recommended Contents:
    - Small screwdriver set
    - Mouthpiece Puller
    - Extra brass mouthpieces
    - Pens, Scissors, tape
    - Extra pencils
    - Band-aids (Note: Need real medical bag for longer, overnight trips)
    - Batons (never forget them for your concerts!)
    - Woodwind: cork grease, key oil, seat strap, neck strap, all possible reeds
    - Brass: valve oil, slide grease, French horn string
    - Percussion: black towel, snare drum mutes

### INSTRUCTORS

If you have a budget to bring in instructors to work with your kids on a regular basis, it helps to be able to keep track of the schedule of when they are coming and keep track of how much/when to pay them!

- Scheduling:
  - Keep track of this on either your hard copy calendar, desk calendar, or digital calendar the regular days that instructors plan to come in.
    - Make checking your instructor calendar part of your regular weekly planning routine, that way you can tell them ahead of time if there is going to be an interruption to the regular classes (Fire Drill, Teacher Work Day, etc.)
- Keep Track of Payment

#### DON'T MAKE MISTAKES WHEN IT COMES TO PAYING PEOPLE

- Invoices
  - Request instructors to send you invoices
    - Always double check their invoice to make sure their number is correct based on how many times they've worked with your students. Having this on the calendar helps double check.
  - Easy to track, easy to send to bookkeepers/boosters
  - Sign-Calendar: Each time an instructor comes in, have them sign your instructor calendar (taped up somewhere with easy access) with how long they were here for. Helps track along with invoices, or helps if invoices aren't sent to you

**Ultimately, you MUST understand your school's policies before hiring people. DOUBLE CHECK policies and communicate EARLY to ensure timely hire and payment.**

## IN CONCLUSION:

Strive for Predictability in your work day by Creating and Implementing Simple, Effective Systems that work for YOU.

If your mental, planning, and teaching spaces are in order then you will find it more FUN to teach.

The goal is to empty your brain of “All the Other Things I Could Be Doing Right Now”

Those “Things” aren't so intimidating when your “Past Self” has already told your “Future Self” when and how you're going to get them done.

Your students, family, and your personal well-being will thank you for the work you did to create Simple, Effective Systems.

## THE CHALLENGE:

Experienced/Planted Teachers:

- Don't be afraid to change a system if it's not working
- Be willing to mentor college observers, student teachers, new teachers, and transferred teachers around you

New/Transferred Teachers:

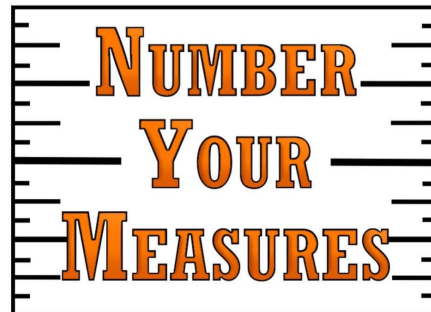
- Ask For Help
- Create Healthy Routine as early as possible to alleviate Survival Mode

## WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER!

**Number Your Measures** is a social media space that is dedicated to creating an on-going resource for organization tips and inspiration for music educators

Facebook: Number Your Measures

Instagram: @number\_your\_measures



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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I really do love to help people find solutions to organizational conundrums.

Please don't hesitate to reach out!