

# Promoting Mental Health Through Music: Practical Applications for the Band Rehearsal

Chris Barchesky  
Associate Director of Bands  
Troy Buchanan High School  
[barchesc@troy.k12.mo.us](mailto:barchesc@troy.k12.mo.us)

Dr. Aaron Wacker  
Coordinator of Music Education  
Southeast Missouri State University  
[awacker@semo.edu](mailto:awacker@semo.edu)

*Do you find that student and teacher stress negatively impacts your music rehearsal? While aptly prepared to lead a rehearsal, teach beginning technique, or prepare for the next performance, many band directors often do not recognize an opportunity to address mental health through music education. In this session, we will discuss many topics regarding mental health for diverse populations of students and teachers. Educators will leave this clinic with techniques and activities to implement into their daily classroom routines.*

- Why are we here today?
  - Attendance
  - School expectations
  - Unrealistic standards
  - Covid-19
  - Trauma
  - Social and emotional learning (SEL)
  - **MENTAL HEALTH**
- What does mental health mean to you?
- Mental health defined
  - NOT mental disorder or mental illness
  - “How a person thinks, feels and acts when faced with life’s situations.... This includes handling stress, relating to other people, and making decisions” – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - “A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” – The World Health Organization
- Applications to the band rehearsal
  - Mindfulness
  - Culturally responsive curriculum
  - Build relationships
  - Classroom environment
- What is mindfulness?
  - Being aware of what is happening in the present moment within and around one’s self with acceptance and curiosity in a nonjudgmental way
  - The practice of mindfulness involves directing one’s attention to a specific focus (e.g., breath, sensation, feeling) or another attentional “anchor.”

- These practices may serve as classroom-based interventions that promote healthy development, prevent problems, or address problems early after onset
- Mindfulness practices
  - Breathing
    - Box Breathing
    - 4-7-8 Breathing
  - Mindfulness minute
  - Thought watching
  - Body Scanning
  - Visualization
- Culturally responsive curriculum
  - “Instruction that acknowledges and accommodates students’ culture, language, and learning styles in the curriculum and classroom” (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p. 180)
  - Diversity in composers
  - Diversity in musical styles and cultures
  - History or inspiration for musical selections
- Build relationships
  - “It’s through human relationships that a child first learns love, compassion, generosity, and creativity” – Fred Rogers
  - Greet students at the door
  - Have conversations about things not related to band/music
  - Attend events that they participate in outside of band/music
  - Read the room
  - Prosocial education
  - Be a champion – Rita Pierson
- Classroom environment
  - Create a safe space
    - Culture of respect and support
    - Preferred names and pronouns
    - LGBTQ+ inclusive language
  - Be Predictable with daily classroom procedures
  - Model expectations
- Closing thoughts
  - Why are we here?
  - Student-centered education
- Resources

