

Paying It Forward: Mentoring a Student Teacher

Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic

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1. Am I ready to take a student teacher?

You should have:

- A solid philosophy of music education.
- A firm idea of what music education is in YOUR particular school and community.
- A good relationship with your students.
- Excellent organizational skills.
- You should feel comfortable in your school and with your own teaching.

*The college may also have a handbook for cooperating teachers, which could be helpful.

2. Are my students ready to have a student teacher?

Do your students:

- Trust you?
- Have the ability to be flexible?
- Have the ability to be kind and compassionate?
- Have the ability to adapt to other people?
- Talk to you honestly?

**What can you do to prepare your students for having a student teacher?

Get them excited. Give them the big sell. Make them think they're special because your program has been chosen for and entrusted with a student teacher. Don't say anything negative about the process of having a student teacher. Make everything positive.

3. What will my student teacher need from me?

- An open mind!
- A desk and a small space of their own, if possible.
- Access to the internet at school.
- A locker and padlock for their personal instruments.
- Know where to park and where to enter the building.
- Scores to conduct with the ensembles.
- Instructions on how to run the copy machine and what copier “etiquette” is.
- A tour of your room and the other places they need to know about in your school. Restrooms, etc.
- Introductions to the principal and secretary.
- Introductions to the rest of the music staff.
- Instructions on how to run the technology in your room.
- Reminder to bring a lunch.

4. What does the student teacher need to bring?

- An open mind!
- Any secondary instruments that they might have or can borrow. And/or their own mouthpieces that they can use on school instruments.
- Their laptop.
- A binder or Google folder in which to save documents.
- A conducting baton.
- ID required by the host school.
- Some student teachers would contact me in advance, which I appreciated.
- Some of them would take a drive out to the school before their first day.

5. The positives:

- This is a way for you to “pay it forward”
- Provide guidance for a future educator, and we really need them right now!
- Provide variety for your students.
- An extra hand to help.
- Keeps you a little more up to date with what’s going on in music education.
- Makes you think about everything you do in your program!

4. The negatives:

- Takes your time away from your students.
- Takes up some of your free/planning time during the school day.
- Another responsibility on your plate.
- What if the student teacher is not very good?
- You're not sure what to do with a student teacher.
- Makes you think really hard about EVERYTHING you do in your band room!

5. Establishing Expectatons

One of the most important things you can do is to lay out the ground rules within the first few days. This is vitally important for a successful experience for you, your student teacher and your students. Don't assume that your student teacher is going to know what to do. Find a quiet time to talk, free from distractions.

Everything I talk to the student teacher about is because it's something I've encountered before with a student teacher.

- Appropriate dress
- Importance of being on time, which is really 15 minutes early
- Demonstrate responsibility
- Show dependability
- Importance of work ethic
- Maintain appropriate demeanor and rapport with students
- Maintain appropriate demeanor and rapport with other teachers and staff
- Start and follow up on necessary paperwork for state certification
- Preparation for lessons and rehearsals- must establish good habits now
- Plan for winter driving/snow days
- Exchange phone numbers
- Go over the school calendar
- Discuss the limits of cell phone/computer use
- Encourage them to ask questions. You don't want them to be afraid to talk to you.
- Establish the expectation that you want them to be doing something at all times
- Discuss self care
- Discuss time management

6. Making the most of their time (and yours)

- Have them observe for no longer than one week.
- Get them in front of students as soon as possible.
- Find out what their strongest secondaries are and start there.
- Give them a specific structure to work within for lessons and rehearsals.
- Allow them to teach lessons. Expect them to play a variety of secondary instruments in all lessons, classes and rehearsals.
- Don't send them to the copy room or to run errands when there is teaching going on. They are not your slave.
- I gave them about 10 min of rehearsal in every rehearsal.
- I did expect a lesson plan in advance of the rehearsal.
- I did not require a long, detailed lesson plan.
- I expected them to follow my general structure for group band lessons.

7. Guiding Growth

- Encourage your student teacher to PRACTICE secondary instruments.
- PRACTICE conducting their assigned pieces.
- Look through your state music lists.
- Play some of the solos on secondary instruments.
- Play through the lesson book series.
- Long term project that will be valuable to you (data entry, organization, etc.).
- Guide them through instrument repairs.
- Provide written and consistent assessment of their progress.
- Share your score study, how you mark your scores.
- No matter where their skills are when they arrive, they should show growth.
- You have an opportunity to encourage them to be a life long learner.

8. State requirements

- Each state has it's own requirements. If you are still under the spectre of edTPA, I am truly sorry.
- As a cooperating teacher, you need to know at least something about it.
- It's really up to the student to know what they are supposed to do and where to go for help.
- Focus group choices, if that's a requirement.
- edTPA does not work well in large group settings. Choose a lesson group.
- "Sell" it to the students - "it's so special to be in our focus group!"
- Help your student teacher choose a topic that will be valuable to your students as well as the student teacher.

9. What to do if things aren't going well

- Establish a strong relationship with the college supervisor.
 - Have a heart to heart in person with the student teacher if you need to.
 - Don't wait!
 - Be honest, but not unkind.
 - Keep accurate notes in case you need to give information to the college supervisor.
 - This is your program and you are your students' advocate. THEY should not have to put up with anything less than the student teacher's best effort.
 - YOU should not have to put up with poor attitude or poor behavior from a student teacher.
 - If there's anything remotely serious, involve your administration as well.
- Remember that NO administrator likes to be blindsided.

10. Additional random thoughts

- Sometimes it seems that the student teacher's time is taken up at the computer doing work for certification or school requirements, instead of working on practical things.
- You will learn to walk that fine line between giving the student teacher enough time and not compromising your time with the students.
- Do not leave your student teacher alone. Ever.
- Do have your student teacher sub for you if they are available during or after student teaching.
- For most student teachers, their student teaching semester is a scary thing!

11. In closing...

YOU have the responsibility to provide the finest example to your student teacher of all the things discussed above.

- If you want them to know their scores, YOU must know yours.
- If you want them to be on time, YOU must always be on time.
- If you want them to be enthusiastic, YOU must be enthusiastic.
- If you don't want them to be on their cell phone during school hours, you shouldn't be on yours, either.
- Etc., etc., etc.

In reality, it's a lot like being a parent:

Be consistent

Be fair

Be compassionate

Be firm when you need to be

Be honest

Be kind

Don't be afraid to tell them when they are out of line or not fulfilling the parameters that you laid out at the beginning of the semester/quarter.

Model everything that you want your
student teacher to be.

*Above all, enjoy the experience!
Hopefully, you will have fun together!
You will make a new friend, who will admire you.
It will make your heart feel good!*