

**Developing individual practice strategies during full ensemble
rehearsals in middle school instrumental music**

by

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Abstract

Middle school-aged instrumental musicians commonly lack the strategies needed to practice effectively and independently, a fact made evident to me through observing my students lead sectionals during class or recording and submitting playing assignments. This deficit in middle schoolers' innate practice strategies revealed how their practice sessions led to the accidental reinforcement of poor habits, hindering genuine progress, and often resulted in frustration. Upon researching this topic, I discovered several methods developed by Picard (2021) that could be implemented to remedy this issue by demonstrating positive and effective practice habits during full ensemble rehearsals. I created and taught a series of lessons for my 7th-grade band where they received direct lessons that explained, modeled, and guided them through various practice strategies, which were immediately reinforced by applying each strategy to a different sight-reading excerpt as an ensemble. It was evident upon reviewing the footage of the ensemble performing that the sight-reading abilities of the group improved throughout the course of each lesson, and those skills will be able to transfer to students' independent practice habits. In the future, I would consider adding more opportunities for students to implement these new strategies during sectionals or individual practice sessions, so they are able to apply their new skills in a more hands-on scenario rather than in the safety of full ensemble rehearsal.

During my time studying at Kansas State University, my teaching philosophy evolved to encompass new skills and ideals. The first major shift in my teaching involved the way I approached preparing for my classes musically with regard to score study, repertoire selection, and conducting mastery. Literature Analysis and History of Wind Bands stressed to me that dedicating time each day to researching quality repertoire and composers is of high importance, so I can foster quality musical experiences for my own students. By selecting high-quality

repertoire, I can guide my students through more than merely learning the notes and rhythms, but rather engaging them in analyzing, reflecting, feeling, and performing the music. In a similar vein, Advanced Conducting pushed me outside of my comfort zone and helped me become more introspective on how the mastery and execution of my conducting reflects in students' confidence and expression in performance. The second change I experienced in my teaching philosophy altered the way I incorporate new research strategies, ideas, and beliefs into my classroom, centering students in my instruction. Research in Music Education taught me how to critically analyze research articles, and I implement this skillset by purposely dedicating time to experiment with new ideas and methods in my teaching as a way to continually learn and grow as an educator. These major changes in my philosophy will continue to evolve and impact how I teach for years to come.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Music is valued in society in a multitude of ways. Humans are drawn to music's sounds, patterns, and emotions even when we struggle to understand the reason why. I believe the purpose of music education is to enable all students access to a variety of quality music that allows them to perform, create, connect, express, and experience the uniqueness of music. The importance of music education cannot be examined without considering the purpose and connections to formal education. In my own classroom, I value a student-centered approach where I instill high expectations. This enables students the freedom to learn through failure while I foster a safe learning environment and implement teaching processes that create engaging, memorable experiences for all students.

Formal education serves as a method to share knowledge, gain experiences, and socialize within a structured environment to improve the quality of life of a general population. More knowledgeable others, as stated by Lev Vygotsky, such as teachers, mentors, and peers in some cases, lead learning experiences by sharing their expertise. The sharing of knowledge develops students' ability to think critically and problem solve, which enables them to make informed choices independently after graduation. Critical thinking is not solely curated from attaining knowledge but also developed through hands-on experiences; take student council for example. Students directly learn and transfer skills such as leadership and cooperation outside of the classroom. In addition to learning environments and activities, formal education offers a space for students to learn to socialize with their peers, which aids in their ability to effectively function in social situations and the work force. Socializing includes learning to deal with both positive effects, such as friendships, and negative effects, such as facing rejection. Students leave their formal education prepared to become civic, functioning members of a society that can

appropriately problem solve and interact with others (Kingston, Hubbard, Lapp, Schroeder, and Wilson, 2003).

Music education is especially posed to benefit students within their formal education and should undoubtedly be included in every student's schooling. Instrumental music classes, such as band, allow students to perform music in formal and informal settings. These performances foster students' creativity by allowing expression of oneself and exploration of one's inner emotions without the need for physical mediums, such as art or poetry. No art form other than music enables students to access emotional and creative outlets through sound. Where other art forms express through painting, drawing, sculpting, or writing, a musician's canvas is the color pallet of sound in which they express themselves.

Providing music education expands the methods available for students to explore their inner self. Music fosters connections between performers and listeners alike. On stage, ensemble members experience connection through their contributions. Every part, no matter how small, is of equal significance and contribution. Yet, students do not need to be in the position of "performer" or "creator" to experience the emotional benefits and connections of music. The informed or novice music listener can work through their own feelings and enhance their human condition through guided listening to music. It is our job as music educators to enable equal access of music to all students, whether that be through performance, or informed listening. We must establish the musical literacy, support, and appreciation of the unique art form that is music (Lehman, 2021).

The connections between formal education and the subsequent inclusion of music education are numerous. Each point from the defense of formal education can apply to music education, including the sharing of knowledge, improving of one's thought processes,

developing leadership, and socialization. Music teachers, who serve as the more knowledgeable other, are required to be highly knowledgeable on their subject matter, from performing on their instrument, to understanding and teaching theory, and applying music history in a relevant manner. The director shares their expertise of playing instruments with their students, guiding them to perform at a high level. This fosters students' mastery of highly detailed, fine-motor skills. In instrumental ensembles, work ethic is developed; learning an instrument is a form of delayed gratification. With more learning occurring online and the rise of systems such as Artificial Intelligence, the importance of students learning hands-on skills that cannot be copy-pasted but only earned through hard-work, dedication, and practice is essential.

Students in music ensembles gain proficiency in music literacy, which is highly transferable to skills in reading and writing. The ability of reading music requires tracking symbols from left to right (reading music) and develops students' sensitivity to phonological distinctions in relation to pitches on a staff (association of sound to symbol). These abilities apply directly to the skills needed to learn reading and writing (Butzlaff, 2000). Journaling is another well-documented, beneficial activity transferable to music (Portman, 2020). Students in music ensembles are frequently required to reflect upon their experiences and ideals with concert reflections and goal writing. Journaling, in this sense, leads students to consider their inner values and motivations, draw inferences, and express themselves.

Outside of the benefits related to skills in the classroom, there is transfer from formal education to music education through activities that garner experiences in leadership and collaboration. Take the student council example that fostered leadership and collaboration skills into consideration. Music ensembles provide these opportunities in addition to so much more. Students develop and refine leadership in band through positions such as drum major or section

leader. These positions instill the importance of time management, problem solving, task delegation, working with others, and serving as a positive role model – all skills easily transferred outside of the music classroom.

Music ensembles also offer acceptance. There is a saying in the band community along the lines of, “The band doesn’t need the student, but the student needs the band.” Although this may appear contradictory upon first impression, its implications are positive. Band, and other music ensembles, offer a place of acceptance, belonging, community, and purpose for any and all students. In addition, students gain valuable socialization and collaboration skills by working as part of a team; no one is “benched” in an ensemble. Every part contributes equally to a performance, and students rise to the occasion. The social and leadership skills learned in music ensembles is a skill highly transferable into the work force after graduation

Other relevant issues in my philosophy concern student-centered learning, the impact of high expectations, the process of learning through failure, the impact of a safe learning environment, utilizing modeling in the band classroom, and positive, but fast-paced instruction. I value decentering the conductor and focusing on students’ involvement in the learning process. Students who feel empowered in their learning tend to take ownership in their program, and this begins to nurture the lifelong appreciation of what goes into being part of a music ensemble. This is seen by giving students the tools they need to work independently, in groups, or by regularly giving them a voice in decisions during the learning process in rehearsals. When students feel this sense of ownership through a student-centered approach, the next element of my philosophy, high expectations, seamlessly instills. The notion that middle school bands perform lesser quality literature with low expectations is fleeting in modern music education. Continually encouraging

middle school musicians to *believe* they can create high quality music facilitates the intrinsic motivation for constant improvement.

While high expectations do not allow students to put in low effort, that does not mean they are not allowed to make mistakes. Students from day one are encouraged to “fail freely.” Learning only occurs through forms of failure, and I instill this philosophy into my students as early as possible. First, students must feel *safe* within my classroom. One of my highest priorities as a music educator is the creation of a safe learning environment. When student’s needs are met, referring to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a safe classroom environment is created, and students’ contributions feel valued. This creates musicians who are willing to “fail” and push their boundaries of comfort, and, simply put, are eager to learn.

The final element in my teaching philosophy pertains to my style of instruction. As a middle school band director, maintaining a fast-paced learning environment is critical. All students need to be engaged for the entirety of rehearsal, which ensures effective classroom management practices and careful pre-planning are implemented on my behalf. A key element in this fast-paced teaching style is modeling from the teacher, whether through singing, clapping, video examples, or playing. Providing model tone examples and playing positions for students to emulate is one of the most effective methods to teach students effectively, and I have found great success in utilizing this method.

The benefits of music education are undeniable. Formal education serves as a method to prepare students to function as civic members of society, and music provides ways to add transferable skills in the aesthetic value of the arts to students. Music enables students to express themselves creatively through unique experiences unavailable in other activities while curating skills in literacy, leadership, empowerment, and work ethic. Teaching students in a student-

centered approach, with high expectations, allows them to fail freely while learning valuable, transferable life skills along the way.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

My philosophy is reflected in the lessons presented below by encouraging student leadership and collaboration, fostering mastery of details with high expectations, curating work ethic, reflection, and aiding in music literacy. Students work in a safe learning environment that encourages the freedom to learn through failure without fear. Modeling from the teacher is demonstrated in every lesson through singing melodies and clapping rhythms, and the atmosphere of learning is positive with a fast-paced instructional method. Leadership and collaboration are evident through students working together in sectionals before and after receiving instruction on practice strategies. Reflection is encouraged through a brief survey inquiring upon students' current practice habits. Students master fine details with high expectations through exposure to a new excerpt of music where they sight-read with little room for error. Students are encouraged to not fear mistakes and accept that the first time they are exposed to trying something new it will not be perfect. This fosters the idea to "fail freely" without creating frustration or apathy towards new material. Students are guided through each practice strategy in a fast-paced manner to keep attention-spans in check, as introducing new material is taxing on students, and I moved quickly yet thoroughly through the material in each of my lessons to stay true to my philosophy.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

These lesson plans were designed to provide middle school students, in this instance, seventh-grade band students, with practice strategies to be implemented during their independent practice. The rationale behind this project was primarily inspired through my observation of middle school band students in two settings. The first setting occurred during student-led sectionals in class. As I monitored various instrument sections practicing throughout the band room, I noticed a pattern: groups would aimlessly repeat difficult passages of their music with no clear strategy and chalk it up as “good enough,” or were stuck on getting started and would question me regarding how to structure their practice session. Students in the “good enough” category were under the impression that their section practiced, but failed to make significant, lasting, and accurate improvements. The students in the “I’m not sure how to get started” category required heavy guidance that led to me leading a miniature rehearsal – not independent practice as originally intended. The second observation that inspired this project arose when I was grading playing tests. I would overhear students talking about the playing test they recently completed, and hear comments, to paraphrase, such as, “Yeah, I just recorded that section thirty times, picked one with the least mistakes, and hoped for the best.” These two instances, observing student-led sectionals, and overheard conversations, made it abundantly clear that students were unaware of how to effectively practice in a non-ensemble setting.

To remedy this issue, I designed a unit which incorporated one lesson a week for three weeks that introduced specific, attainable, and applicable practice strategies in a full ensemble setting, which could then transfer as independent practice habits. I selected four basic but effective practice strategies that could be modeled in a full ensemble setting: (1) Rhythm, (2), Tempo, (3) Chunking, and (4) Whole-Part-Whole. The first lesson administered a self-

assessment of their current practice habits and introduced each of the four strategies, and the subsequent two lessons went into further detail on how to implement each specific practice strategy.

Lesson Plan 1

2014 Music National Standards

Performing. Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine (Intermediate): MU:Pr5.e.E.8a (National Association for Music Education [NAfME], 2014).

Performing. Present (Intermediate): MU:Pr6.1.E.8a (NAfME, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students in the seventh-grade band at Waverly Middle School are in their third full year of playing their instruments on a daily basis in school. Students have a solid understanding of the foundations of music making including proper embouchure, posture, instrument carriage, intonation, and tone production, and are proficient at most basic rhythms, simple and compound meters, key signatures and accidentals, and musical expressions including dynamics and articulations.

Rehearsal Objective

At the conclusion of Lesson 1, students will be able to identify four specific practice strategies they can implement during individual practice, including (1) chunking, (2) rhythm, (3) tempo, and (4) whole-part-whole. In later lessons, students will learn more specific details on applying these strategies.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Assessment of students meeting Lesson 1's rehearsal objective will be obtained by informally, orally assessing students on each of the four practice strategies introduced via open-

ended questioning, as well as informally examining the written notes students take during the lesson. Students' current understanding of independent practice will be gathered via a Google Form in a three question, short-answer questionnaire. Lessons 2 & 3 will be guided by the feedback gathered from Lesson 1, orally, visually, and written.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Modifications and accommodations used include: use of varied colors on whiteboard to help visual differentiation. No other modifications or accommodations were required by this class.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

Instructional materials used include: Google Slideshow of four strategies, and an unfamiliar musical excerpt. Resources used include: Sightreading Bootcamps from John McCallister's website's free resources tab. Technologies used include: Projector with laptop, Redcat Bluetooth Microphone, one-to-one Chromebooks with Google Forms, Yamaha Harmony Director.

Rehearsal Plan

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
5 mins	Introduction	Introduce research project to students.	Teacher provides brief verbal overview of lesson.	Verbal confirmation for understanding.
8 mins	Self-Assessment	Gauge students' current understanding of practice strategies.	Using one-to-one Chromebooks, students complete a three question, short answer survey regarding their current practice habits.	Self-assessment completed by students, teacher uses to guide future lessons.

5 mins	4-Strategy Breakdown	Provide brief overview of four strategies focused on in this unit, and how it will be implemented during a sight-reading exercise.	Using slideshow, the four strategies (1: Rhythm, 2: Tempo, 3: Chunking, and 4: Whole-Part-Whole) are defined. Students write the shortened definitions on the back of the musical excerpt to be used.	Teacher informally assesses by visually examining notes while walking through room during lecture.
5 mins	Strategy 1 - Rhythm	Provide brief overview of specific strategy students can implement to learn new rhythms.	Using the first four measures of an unfamiliar excerpt, students label it as “Rhythm,” and count, clap, and perform the four measures.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students’ accuracy to rhythm.
5 mins	Strategy 2 - Tempo	Provide brief overview of specific strategy students can implement to learn new rhythms.	Using the next four measures of the same excerpt, students label it as “Tempo,” and perform the measures at three different tempos of gradually increasing tempo.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students’ accuracy to notes and rhythms.
5 mins	Strategy 3 – Chunking	Provide brief overview of specific strategy students can implement to learn new rhythms.	Using the next four measures of the same excerpt, students label it as “Chunking,” and perform each measure separately, then perform	Teacher aurally assesses based on students’ accuracy to notes and rhythms.

			them together, identifying when to dedicate more time.	
5 mins	Strategy 4 – Whole-Part-Whole	Provide brief overview of specific strategy students can implement to learn new rhythms.	Using the entire excerpt (including four remaining measures), students perform entire excerpt, “identify” a problem area, clean problem area, and perform as a “whole.”	Teacher aurally assesses based on students’ accuracy to notes and rhythms.
2 mins	Wrap-Up	Review each strategy introduced.	Teacher reviews all strategies introduced and how they were practiced by students using the unfamiliar excerpt.	Students are asked to volunteer and provide definitions of each strategy.

Table 1 Rehearsal Plan

In this lesson, one goal was to introduce middle school band students to four basic practice strategies in a full ensemble setting, with the intention of these skills being transferable to independent practice. Those strategies include : (1) Counting, (2) Tempo, (3) Chunking, and (4) Whole-Part-Whole. My second goal was to gauge students’ current independent practice habits by administering a brief, short-answer survey. The survey included the following questions: (1) “Think back to our sectionals last quarter. When you were stuck on a hard measure/passage, what strategies/methods did you use to try and improve it?” (2) “When you look at a piece of music, what are “red flags” that tell you *I definitely need to practice that part?*” and (3) “How do you know when you’ve officially learned a section of music to a level you are proud of?” Below, Table 2 lists all practice strategies stated by students from the initial

practice strategy survey. The left column indicates the strategies listed by students, and the right column lists the number of students who named that strategy, or a method deemed as similar.

Listed Practice Strategy	Number of Responses
Played Again / Repetition	26
Wrote In Notes/Looked Up Fingerings	9
Silent Fingering/Sizzling	7
Clap Rhythms	3
Fix Accidentals	1
Ask A Friend	10
Chunking	1

Table 2 Initial Student Survey Results

The results of this survey are consistent to the results of similar research conducted by Picard (2021). In Picard’s study, the most common strategy initially listed by students was repetition, which aligns with this survey. The remainder of the answers indicate a variety of inconsistent strategies, as seen above. In the second question of the survey, students were asked what “red flags” they looked for to indicate a section of music was challenging. Most students listed a version of the following indicators: unfamiliar notes/rhythms, accidentals, high/low ranges, and key signature. For the third question, which inquired about students’ assessment of their own learning, the following graph shows the results of students’ answers. Students were allowed to check more than one box.

3. The "Finish Line" (Evaluation)

 Copy chart

How do you know when you've officially "learned" a section of music to a level you're proud of? Check any that apply to you.

86 responses

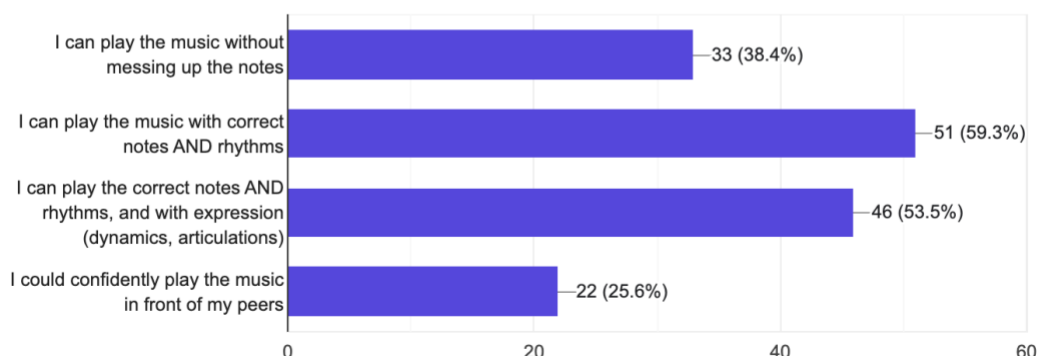


Figure 1 - Initial Survey Results Question 3

After completing this survey, the students learned the basic concept behind each strategy introduced at the start of the lesson by defining them with hand-written notes and implementing each strategy using an unfamiliar musical excerpt with guidance from the teacher.

In this lesson, the main instructional strategy utilized was a lecture-style presentation from the teacher where students wrote down definitions. After each strategy was defined, students labeled four different sections of their musical excerpt with one of the practice strategies, and followed an "I do, we do, you do," approach to each strategy in four-bar examples. For example, with rhythm, the teacher modeled how to count and clap one measure, the teacher and students worked together on the next measure, and then students completed a final measure without the teacher. For assessment, I used formal feedback in the form of students completing a written survey to review their current practice habits. I implemented an informal assessment to gauge student understanding by walking around the room, visually assessing students' written notes during the lecture, and aurally assessing students' aptitude when performing each selected section of music with its aligned practice strategy.

Moving forward, I will adjust this lesson in a few ways. First, I noted that some students struggled to stay actively engaged through the explanation portion of the lesson. Since this was a new concept to teach for me, I over-explained, and could do more “explaining” via modeling. To remedy this, I could create a handout that students fill in some answers, but not all. This handout also ensures all students receive the same details and definitions, accommodating for students who struggle with note taking, whether from a reading or writing standpoint. The last change I would make in future lessons would be to use a familiar musical excerpt to introduce the four practice strategies. Using a sight-reading excerpt on top of explaining each concept was a lot of information in a short amount of time for middle school students. This instruction expanded my thinking by forcing me to explain *how* to practice to students. As band directors, we often fall prey to rehearsing our groups, using the aforementioned strategies, but do not ever exclusively *teach* our students how to apply it independently, and thus wonder why they struggle to practice productively on their own! My teaching was enhanced by gaining a deeper understanding of how to provide students with the tools they need to be successful on their own!

Lesson Plan 2

2014 Music National Standards

Performing. Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine (Intermediate): MU:Pr5.e.E.8a (NAfME, 2014).

Performing. Present (Intermediate): MU:Pr6.1.E.8a (NAfME, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Building on the skills introduced in Lesson 1, students have a basic understanding of four foundational practice strategies: rhythm, tempo, chunking, and whole-part-whole. Students were guided through each strategy by taking written-notes and a step-by-step application using an

unfamiliar sight-reading excerpt. Students are also building strategy one upon an established understanding of counting and writing rhythms using the Eastman counting system.

Rehearsal Objective

At the conclusion of Lesson 2, students will be able to provide a more detailed definition of independent practice strategy one (rhythm) and two (tempo), and execute them in a large ensemble setting applicable to independent practice. Practice strategy one of rhythm will define, model, and practice implementing how to understand and execute unfamiliar rhythms using the following: counting (written and verbal), clapping with counting, and playing on a static pitch, such as concert B-flat. A metronome will run during that entire portion. Practice strategy two of tempo will define, model, and practice implementing how to incorporate the usage of a metronome in independent practice, and provide methods for students to slow down to attainable tempos, gain correct repetitions, and slowly increase the tempo to build muscle memory and connection.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Assessment of students meeting Lesson 2's rehearsal objective will be obtained by informally aurally assessing students as they perform each excerpt (rhythmic excerpt or short, unfamiliar musical etude) in class after applying the intended practice strategy, whether strategy one or two. Reviewing the footage recorded in class will also offer insight to students' achievement of objectives.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Modifications and accommodations used include: use of varied colors on whiteboard to help visual differentiation. No other modifications or accommodations were required by this class.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

Instructional materials used include: Google Slideshow of four strategies, and an unfamiliar musical excerpt. Resources used include: Sightreading Bootcamps from John McCallister's website's free resources tab. Technologies used include: Projector with laptop, Redcat Bluetooth Microphone, one-to-one Chromebooks with Google Forms, Yamaha Harmony Director.

Rehearsal Plan

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
2 mins	Introduction	Familiarize students with lesson goals.	Teacher provides brief verbal overview of lesson.	Verbal confirmation for understanding.
5 mins	Detailed Discussion of Strategy One (Rhythm)	Provide step-by-step guide of how to independently figure out rhythms.	Using slideshow, the following steps are discussed: (1) Counts, (2) Say, (3) Clap/Say, (4) Perform. Students write down these steps.	Teacher informally assesses by visually examining notes while walking through room during lecture.
3 min	Students Write Counts, Teacher Models	Students receive hands-on practice of Step 1: Writing Counts. Students compare with teacher at end.	Students receive an unfamiliar rhythmic excerpt (no pitch). Students write in counts with a one-minute timer (Eastman System).	Teacher writes each measure, allowing corrections. Teacher visually assesses based on corrections seen.
2 mins	Students Verbally Count, then Clap/Count	Students gain kinetic connection to aural image of rhythm.	Students count rhythm verbally with metronome, then clap and say rhythm.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students' accuracy to rhythm.

3 min	Students Perform, Brain Break	Students apply rhythm to their instruments.	Students perform rhythm excerpt on a static pitch (Concert B-Flat). Students receive a short, 60-second break.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students' accuracy to rhythm.
5 min	Detailed Discussion of Strategy Two (Tempo)	Provide step-by-step guide of how to utilize varied tempos to learn excerpts.	Using slideshow, the following steps are discussed: (1) Slow Tempo, (2) Three Runs No Mistakes, (3) Increase Tempo, (4) Repeat As Needed.	Teacher informally assesses by visually examining notes while walking through room during lecture.
2 mins	Sizzle Excerpt at Starting Tempo	Students sizzle at attainable tempo.	With a metronome at slow tempo (60 BPM), students sizzle (hiss air through teeth and finger/ghost notes on instruments).	Teacher aurally assesses based on students' accuracy to rhythm.
2 mins	Perform Excerpt at Starting Tempo	Students attain correct muscle memory with correct notes.	Students perform excerpt slowly with same metronome marking, aiming for correct notes and rhythms. 3 repetitions.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students' accuracy to rhythm.
8 mins	Increase Tempo, Repeat	Students gain confidence on excerpts through varied repetition.	Teacher incrementally increases tempo on metronome. After students are accurately performing the excerpt at one tempo three times, tempo increases.	Teacher aurally assesses based on students' accuracy to rhythm.

2 mins	Wrap-Up	Provide brief overview of two strategies covered in lesson.	Teacher discusses both strategies and how they were implemented by students using excerpts.	Students are asked to volunteer and provide definitions of each strategy.
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Table 3 Rehearsal Plan

In Lesson Plan 2, my goal was to dig deeper into two of the practice strategies introduced in Lesson Plan 1. For practice strategy one, counting, I walked students through a structured plan of how to count and form an aural image of unfamiliar rhythms using concepts they already understood in a full ensemble setting using the Eastman Counting System. This system assigns a sequential number, symbol, or letter to each rhythm. For the purposes of this report, only quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes will be discussed. Quarter notes are assigned an individual number. When subdividing eighth notes, a sequential number is assigned to the first eighth-note in a group while a plus symbol (+), which is spoken as “and” is assigned to the second eighth-note of each grouping. Grouping of four sixteenth notes begin with a number, followed an “e” on the second note, “and” (+) on the third note, and “a” on the fourth note. See Figure 2 (Zumbrota-Mazeppa 2026) below.

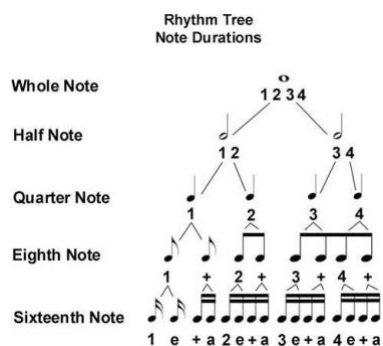


Figure 2 - Eastman Counting System Rhythm Tree

For practice strategy two, tempo, my goal was to guide students through incrementally increasing tempo on a performed rhythm without allowance for mistakes. For practice strategy one, students learned each step in the process of decoding a new rhythm by first writing in the

counts, then saying the rhythm in time with a metronome, moving to clapping and counting with a metronome, and lastly performing the rhythm on a static pitch with a metronome. For practice strategy two, students learned how to effectively adjust tempo to accurately learn new music with a metronome. If mistakes were prevalent, the tempo was slowed down until it was attainable. Students were then instructed on the importance of completing three repetitions with no mistakes before increasing the tempo, and were instructed to repeat the cycle until they achieved their desired tempo, whether they attained it in one practice session or several.

The main methods of instructional strategies included in this lesson were a lecture style introduction to each concept, and then a hands-on application of each concept in a full ensemble setting. After students received an in-depth explanation of each strategy, they applied each step as close as possible to how they would implement them when practicing independently as an ensemble. For example, during the rhythm exercise, the students wrote in the counts to a rhythmic excerpt while a timer ran. Then, students counted the rhythm out loud with a metronome, followed by counting and clapping, then performing. During this lesson, assessment stayed purely informal. I judged students' readiness for the next step in each process by aurally assessing their proficiency when performing each excerpt step-by-step.

I will continue to adjust my teaching in the future by allotting more opportunities for students to apply these strategies in an authentic setting. Although the main goal of this unit is to teach independent practice strategies during full ensemble rehearsal, I pondered if there was a method where I can allow students to "test out" each strategy in an independent, yet still guided, setting, such as utilizing a practice room where they have to record themselves, submit it, and review direct feedback so I can gauge their accuracy of correct implementation of these strategies. This instruction expanded my thinking by pushing me to explain these strategies in a

concise manner digestible by middle school aged students; it enhanced my teaching practice by forcing me to slow down when introducing new, complex topics that may require several methods of explanation, allowing me to teach in a more effective manner in the future.

Lesson Plan 3

2014 Music National Standards

Performing. Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine (Intermediate): MU:Pr5.e.E.8a (NAfME, 2014).

Performing. Present (Intermediate): MU:Pr6.1.E.8a (NAfME, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Building on the skills introduced in Lesson 1 and 2, students have a basic understanding of four foundational practice strategies: rhythm, chunking, whole-part-whole, and tempo. Students were guided through a thorough implementation of strategy one (rhythm) and strategy two (tempo) in Lesson 2.

Rehearsal Objective

At the conclusion of Lesson 3, students will be able to provide a more detailed definition of independent practice strategy three (chunking) and four (whole-part-whole), and execute them in a large ensemble setting applicable to independent practice. Practice strategy three of chunking will define, model, and practice implementing how to independently identify a challenging section of music, and guide students through the process of breaking sections down into small, digestible pieces, such as one measure or count. Practice strategy four of whole-part-whole will define, model, and practice how to play a piece in entirety, then hone into a section in need of improvement, and then work that section back into the piece.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Assessment of students meeting Lesson 3's rehearsal objective will be obtained by informally aurally assessing students as they perform each excerpt (unfamiliar musical etude) in class after applying the intended practice strategy, whether strategy three or four. Reviewing the footage recorded in class will also offer insight to students' achievement of objectives covered in this unit.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Modifications and accommodations used include: use of varied colors on whiteboard to help visual differentiation. No other modifications or accommodations were required by this class.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

Instructional materials used include: Google Slideshow of four strategies, and an unfamiliar musical excerpt. Resources used include: Sightreading Bootcamps from John McCallister's website's free resources tab. Technologies used include: Projector with laptop, Redcat Bluetooth Microphone, one-to-one Chromebooks with Google Forms, Yamaha Harmony Director.

Rehearsal Plan

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
2 mins	Introduction	Familiarize students with lesson goals.	Teacher provides brief verbal overview of lesson.	Verbal confirmation for understanding.
5 mins	Detailed Discussion of Strategy	Provide step-by-step guide of how to independently identify an area of	Using slideshow, the following steps are discussed: (1) Isolate (2) Practice/Repetition,	Teacher informally assesses by visually examining notes while

	Three (Chunking)	improvement, and break it down into a smaller section.	(3) Add Beats, If Required (4) Loop. Students write down these steps.	walking through room during lecture.
6 min	Identify and Isolate Area of Improvement	Students practice isolating challenging measures of music.	Students receive an unfamiliar musical excerpt. Students scan, looking for “warning signs” (ledger lines, lots of “black ink,” i.e. 16 th notes, accidentals, unfamiliar rhythms), then select a measure of section of beats to practice.	Teacher “pre- identifies” challenging areas in excerpt, compares to those students choose. May offer guidance if needed.
2 mins	Guided Practice of Chunk	Students are guided through breaking down and learning a challenging section of music.	Students break down challenging sections into attainable “chunks,” no larger than one measure, but as small as one beat. Students perform each small chunk correctly at slow tempo, aiming for correct notes and rhythms.	Teacher informally assesses aurally based on the accuracy observed while students work through each chunk as an ensemble.
5 min	Detailed Discussion of Strategy Four	Provide step-by-step guide of how to independently identify area of improvement	Using slideshow, the following steps are discussed: (1) Play Entire Passage/Excerpt (2) Isolate Problem	Teacher informally assesses by visually examining notes while walking through

	(Whole-Part-Whole)	during a full run of a piece of music.	Area, (3) Utilize “Chunking” (4) Perform Entire Passage/Excerpt. Students write down these steps.	room during lecture.
2 min	Play Excerpt as “Whole,” Lookout	Students perform entire unfamiliar excerpt.	With a metronome running, students perform entire excerpt at a slow tempo. Students are looking to identify “trouble” sections.	Teacher informally assesses aurally based on the accuracy observed while students work through the entire excerpt as an ensemble.
2 mins	Isolate Identified “Lookout”	Students are guided through learning an isolated area in need of improvement.	Students verbally identify areas of concern, and mark these in their music. “Chunking” strategies previously learned are implemented to each area.	Teacher “pre-identifies” challenging areas in excerpt, compares to those students choose. May offer guidance if needed.
2 mins	Play Excerpt as a Whole	Students perform entire excerpt again.	Students perform entire excerpt, with improvements implemented in identified areas.	Teacher informally assesses aurally based on the accuracy observed while students work through the entire excerpt as an ensemble.

2 mins	Wrap-Up	Provide brief overview of two strategies covered in lesson.	Teacher discusses both strategies and how they were implemented by students using excerpts.	Students are asked to volunteer and provide definitions of each strategy.
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Table 4 Rehearsal Plan

In Lesson Plan 3, my goal was to build on strategy three (chunking) and four (whole-part-whole), which were briefly introduced in Lesson Plan 1. For practice strategy three, my main goal was to provide students with the tools to learn challenging sections by breaking them down into bite-sized pieces. For practice strategy four, my goal was to guide students on identifying areas of music in need of improvement while performing a piece or section of music in entirety. Students learned to utilize chunking, which by the definition I provided, instructed students to identify a “red flag” area by looking for accidentals, ledger lines, unfamiliar notes, or lots of “black ink” (for example: sixteenth notes). After identifying an area of music in need of improvement, students were instructed to work one measure at a time, breaking it down into one beat at a time if necessary. Slowly, they would correct the music one beat to measure at a time. Students then learned the “whole-part-whole” strategy, which paired well with chunking; they were instructed to play a piece of music or large passage as a whole, and note any “red flag” areas. Students then applied “chunking” to the noted areas where they struggled, and after practicing, they played the entire passage again to build muscle memory.

Similar to Lesson Plan 2, my instructional strategy began with a brief lecture-style introduction and in-depth explanation of both strategy three and four while students completed written notes. Directly following this portion of the lesson, students completed a “hands-on” application of each strategy to a sight-reading excerpt as a full ensemble. This method then transferred to the students’ ability to utilize them while independently practicing. For example, I pre-marked in my score measures of the sight-reading selection I knew students would struggle

with, and after the students worked together as a class to mark their “red flag” sections, we broke down each section into one measure chunks and built each measure one beat at a time. During this lesson, I implemented informal assessments. The informal assessments took place in the form of aurally judging students’ performance accuracy to written notes and rhythms in each excerpt, and visually observing students’ hand-written notes during the lecture portion.

Throughout this unit’s three lessons, seventh-grade band students during full-ensemble rehearsal were familiarized with four practice strategies. Each of the following strategies were selected with intention of transferability to independent practice: (1) Rhythm, (2) Tempo, (3) Chunking, and (4) Whole-Part-Whole. During the first lesson, students demonstrated thoughtful self-assessments regarding their current practice strategies and were attentive to learning about each practice strategy. In the following two lessons, students were able to effectively demonstrate and execute each identified practice strategy using a pre-selected, sight-reading excerpt with the careful guidance of the director, and could define each strategy in detail. Although I did not collect a post-unit self-assessment of the practice strategies covered, observable growth occurred in students’ practice behaviors in subsequent student-led sectionals and playing tests; I received less questions during sectionals pertaining to starting and structuring a practice session, and I observed students utilizing metronomes, clapping, counting, and working music in small chunks rather than mindless repetition. During playing tests, students would slow themselves down on difficult sections, and work through chunks before attempting to record themselves playing.

In the future, the largest adjustment I would make would be to implement a post-unit, self-reflection survey. Although the students’ answers from the initial survey guided my decisions on how to reinforce the strategies I taught, there was no method for me to gauge

whether students retained the information presented over the course of the unit. Unfortunately, with this being my first year in this teaching position, I was juggling numerous new and demanding elements, and giving up more instructional time to collect a post-survey time slipped through the cracks. This instruction, through all lessons, expanded my thinking by helping me realize the preconceived level of understanding students possess regarding how to practice independently. In the initial self-assessment, most answers provided by students contained statements such as, “I played it over and over until it sounded good,” or “Repeated it until I got it right,” and my hope is that after this unit, students feel more confident utilizing specific, targeted strategies to improve their practice at home. I will continue to hone in teaching these skills in an applicable manner during full ensemble rehearsals to push my students and myself.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

When I first joined band in fifth grade, I demonstrated high musical aptitude and genuinely enjoyed playing my instrument. I felt that I had finally found the activity in which I excelled, and yet despite my musical inclination, I severely struggled with confidence. Reassurance from my music teachers that I was a capable musician who had proved herself time and time again through various accomplishment such as being selected for All-State Band three consecutive years did nothing to ease the self-doubt that always lingered in the back of my mind. During my undergraduate degree, I vividly recall the experience of standing in front of my peers conducting *The Barber of Seville* while feeling a heavy pit in my stomach as I doubted my own validity and skills, disregarding various feats proving my musical excellence such as being principal chair in the university's Wind Ensemble. During my fourth year of teaching, I attended a band conference and learned that experiencing repeated instances of self-doubt and self-questioning such as "Do I even know what I'm doing?" is a phenomenon called "Imposter Syndrome." Enrolling at Kansas State University to pursue my master's degree three summers ago in music on the band track was a leap of faith my confidence in music and education alike needed to push myself beyond the self-doubt and into honing and developing my skills as an educator.

In my time working towards my Master of Music Degree at Kansas State University, my teaching style and philosophies developed and improved, while my thought processes evolved in a manner involving deeper critical thinking and analysis. My teaching style was impacted not only by the way I approach thoughtfully curating my lesson plans, but also the different learning theories I utilize in my classroom. Technical teaching experiences altered the physical aspects of my teaching, including refining my conducting, increasing my knowledge regarding instrument-

specific techniques, and my ability to quickly and effectively analyze music scores. Significant developments occurred in my thought processes surrounding my repertoire selection. I now take into consideration analytical and historical aspects, and how to better integrate the ideals in my teaching philosophy into my daily teaching through literature.

Since I began my teaching career, I intended for my teaching philosophy to be student-centered. I recently came to realize this is not reflected as thoroughly as I prefer in the teaching philosophy I originally crafted when I began my master's degree, indicating an area of change and growth. In my first teaching philosophy, I focused on elements such as my teaching style being rote-to-note, utilizing a fast-paced learning environment to engage the age group I teach (middle school), implementing rigid procedures and expectations to provide students with a predictable and stable learning environment, and encouraging students to fail freely in a safe place such as band. Although these aspects are still important to me as an educator, these core elements of my philosophy lack in one department: focusing on allowing students to feel like they are part of the learning! I now emphasize methods to engage students leading their learning, by incorporating student-led activities, reflections, and discussions on a daily basis in my classroom. An example of this shift in my philosophy was showcased by my quarterly, student-led sectionals. Before I began at Kansas State, I did not feel I possessed the capability to thoroughly train and guide my students to work independently and still be productive.

Courses such as Research in Music Education, Theories of Music Teaching, and Curriculum and Instruction helped me realize methods I could use to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies and increase students' engagement and learning. Elements from differing learning theories such as behaviorism, Gordon's Music Learning Theory, and Natural Learning Processes, for examples, allow me to introduce and reinforce concepts to students in a multitude

of methods. No single learning theory is best, so I adapted a curated mixture. As an example, rather than solely teaching rhythm with the Eastman counting system, I utilize rote call-and-response, aural identification through rhythmic dictation, clapping with a metronome, playing on static pitches, randomized sight-reading, and written counting. I established behaviorism ideologies through my implementation of strict and enforced procedures for students as they enter and exit my classroom. I pulled ideas from Gordon's Music Learning Theory by incorporating aural-based instructional methods by implementing ear-training to all my bands daily. I also utilize aspects of Natural Learning Theory by building in bursts of, "Now try this section on your own for 60 seconds," allowing students to explore and learn new musical concepts on their own. These are just a few examples of how I've grown as an educator as I strive to be well-rounded in my presentation and teaching styles.

Several courses developed the skills I utilize as a music-specific educator, including Literature Analysis, Advanced Instrumental Conducting, and History of Wind Bands. I primarily teach middle school band, which often falls prey to the preconceived notion that the music performed for this age group is of lesser quality than literature composed for high school and professional level bands; subsequently, expectations for musical excellence and execution should be lowered. This idea could not be further from the truth. As I progressed through my master's coursework, I began to prioritize pushing the notion that not only is this belief wrong, but I actively advocate for this age group at the different clinics and conventions I attend. I plan to audition my eighth-grade band to perform at the Nebraska State Bandmasters Association Convention next year in hopes to showcase the capabilities of middle school musicians if they are held to a high standard.

History of Wind Bands and History and Philosophy of Music Education were both fascinating courses, and they helped me understand how public-school music education, especially bands, evolved to where we are today, and the struggles we faced to gain our place. This appreciation led me to intentionally plan lessons for my middle schoolers on the historical backgrounds of our programmed literature; throughout this year this involved students reading program notes, presenting brief “composer of the week” lessons once a week with a term we coined “Listening Friday,” or students selecting the composer of one of our pieces and conducting research on their bibliography and accomplishments. These changes were all new implementations to my curriculum this year as a direct result of taking History of Wind Bands.

Literature Analysis altered how I prepare for my lessons, the biggest impact surrounding the intentionality used to select literature for my bands. My discretion for consideration to program literature is now dictated by sitting down with a score and analyzing it through a couple lenses. First, “Will this piece meet the developmental level of my students, and appropriately challenge them technically and musically?” Secondly, “Does this piece offer enough musical merit to teach students new skills while engaging them?” Starting in sixth grade, band is a daily class at the school district that employs me – it is my duty as their director to select music worth dedicating numerous hours of rehearsal refining, connecting, and analyzing in preparation of a performance. Now, I no longer browse the “popular selections” page on JW Pepper, quickly scan a score, listen to the preview recording, and decide that’s “good enough” to program for my students. In comparison to my methods for selecting music prior to completing Literature Analysis, I experienced tremendous growth in this area this year.

The refresher I received on conducting last summer taking Advanced Conducting helped improve my confidence on complex conducting phrases, and opened me to questioning the

thought and intentionality as to why and how I delivered cues, conducting patterns, and expression. A specific note of feedback that struck me from residency week during this course was Dr. Tracz prompting me as I conducted our lab band with, “Imagine you are playing as a member of the band. What clarity of intention and gesture from your conductor would make you play confidently?” This advice stuck with me, and now when I am practicing the conducting the scores for my own bands, I often find myself asking that same question and reevaluating the prep breath I give, or the stance I take with my posture. I noted a significant increase in my confidence selecting more challenging literature this year. In tandem with my newly refined skills to select appropriate literature, the thought of analyzing a complex score and learning its conducting demands did not outweigh the educational benefits for my students.

Throughout my three years studying at Kansas State, I evolved as an educator, musician, and person. My teaching philosophy changed to stress the importance of centering students in what we do as educators. My teaching strategies were pushed to better suit all styles of learners in my classroom by intentionally incorporating different styles, approaches, and learning theories. My thought processes on what literature I select for my students grew to consider the musical depth and historical elements of the composer of the work, and my conducting improved as I learned to be more intentional with how I hold myself and direct on the podium. These skill refinements and advancements in my beliefs will continue to push me to grow and seek out opportunities to evolve as an educator in the future.

I now believe the label of “confident” better suits me not only as a music educator, but as a person. The persistent self-doubt I experienced in my adolescence and through my first few years of teaching transformed into self-assuredness in my teaching and musical abilities during my graduate studies. Not only was I able to foster my students to better themselves with new

practice habits through this project, but I learned what I can accomplish when I leave doubt aside and how I can foster positive change in myself and others.

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