

**Incorporating small ensembles in the middle school band rehearsal  
to improve individual musical responsibility**

by

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## **Abstract**

In my 7<sup>th</sup> grade band rehearsals, I found that my students were not covering parts as confidently as they are capable of, and sometimes hiding within their respective sections. By assigning each student a small ensemble and rehearsing them in a group setting, my project helped students develop their individual musicianship and raised confidence in their playing. To begin, I assigned each student in the band to a small ensemble, utilizing three different pieces from an ensemble methods book. Pieces were first rehearsed as larger ensembles, with the four groups on each different piece rehearsing simultaneously. As we progressed, parts were broken down for more detailed rehearsal, and ensembles were divided in half (two of the four at a time). Finally, the ensembles were separated, and students were on their own to start and play together.

Over the course of my master's program at Kansas State, I have shifted to a more peer-led and peer-centered approach to music education. I visualize this concept as horizontal versus vertical. In my beginning band (6<sup>th</sup> grade classes), I have continued to keep teaching from a teacher-centered (vertical) standpoint, ensuring that students are given proper instruction regarding technique, articulation, posture, etc. As my students move into 7<sup>th</sup> grade, instruction has turned more towards full-ensemble instruction to include blend, balance, intonation, etc. This remains as vertical teaching. During my master's program, I have learned that this second year of band is a great time to have students do more horizontal learning and teaching as it gives them the chance to review their own playing while helping their fellow student.

Another development in my teaching stems from some historically philosophical approaches to music education, namely diversifying students on different instruments and into different genres of music (and consequently music education). I have implemented both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade jazz band into the school schedule. Like peer led (horizontal) teaching, the jazz

program has offered students the opportunity to use their primary musical skills in another setting, be it on a secondary instrument, or through improvisation in the jazz ensembles. It also adds more opportunity for horizontal instruction; students on primary instruments in jazz helping students on secondary instruments in jazz. Before my time at Kansas State, I was more reserved in the idea of these young players adding a secondary instrument as they were just scratching the surface on their primary instruments. I have seen, through the addition of the jazz program, that though elements of the learning curve can initially be steep, students who seek a secondary instrument or at minimum a secondary genre have the potential to thrive on both. Building musical skills in one area also builds them in the other.

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## **Dedication**

This report, project, and entire career are dedicated to my parents who gave me what I needed when life was difficult, listened to my musical racket when life was loud, and told me to hold on to the wheel and keep driving when life was stressful. I'm forever grateful.

## Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Music is the avenue through which we, as humans, learn to be alive. Music can be confidence, feeling, commitment, determination, comfort, unrest, and soul; but in the end, music is unlimited. Music is both “I” and “We.” It continually bridges the gap between both. Music education is the giving of these gifts.

### How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

In society there is education. As long as there have been human inhabitants, there has been education. The formality of education certainly has developed, but regardless, it has always existed. In primitive times education was based on survival; how to catch food, how to collect water, how to build shelter, etc. Someone figured out how to do these tasks, and eventually showed the skills to someone else. That is the premise of education. As civilization has developed, of course those primary instinctual tasks have become formalized. We now buy our food, we plumb our residences, and we have craftsmen that are experienced in building shelter that has longevity. Naturally our education has shifted, but it has not ended.

My entire journey to music, and ultimately music education, began because I wanted to have the element of playing an instrument as part of my life. In short, I wanted to *be* cool, I wanted to *feel* cool, and I wanted to have a skill that *I thought* was cool. In the beginning it was selfish; not in the sense that I didn't want to share with others, but in the sense that I didn't know any better and wanted the music to be for me.

At ten years old I received an electric guitar for Christmas and began chipping away, taking lessons and playing for hours in my bedroom. The following year, at eleven years old, I joined beginning band at my local elementary school, playing saxophone. This was where my true formal music education began.

The backstory before music though, should be discussed. I was raised in a very loving and supportive household. My parents provided my needs and encouraged me in all ways. As an only child, I received all the attention. Despite all this, I lacked one major life component: confidence. To describe directly, I was a scared little boy. Many people do not realize that they can develop the ability to feel confident by using the power of the mind, emotions, and mental focus (Carrington & Whitten, 2005). The art of learning music, and the craft of being a musician, include these elements. They helped me, and I've seen them help countless others.

When I began to learn music, I began to learn confidence. Much like music, the process was slow, sometimes painfully so. However, confidence and music both share a major ingredient, time. As time progressed, naturally I gained more skills on my two instruments, though both avenues differed. My guitar instruction was much more informal. I took weekly lessons and strummed away in my room on my own. My saxophone progress was much more formal, as it occurred in school and included all the beginning band elements one would expect. As I transitioned into high school, my band experience began to offer more leadership opportunities. In addition, I simply was getting better on my instrument. The confidence was building. I knew I needed to be involved in music and music education moving forward. This was when I had the epiphany that I could pursue music education as a career. I could stay in band.

Music education is important because it changes people for the better. It improves quality of life for those involved. Learning to play an instrument or to sing improves the quality of life for that person. Furthermore, it positively impacts non musicians. Christopher Small (1998) coined the term "musicking" and describes it as follows: "To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or

practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (p. 9). While I disagree that just by hearing music you are “involved” in music, I do think that enjoying music, hearing music, and experiencing music does, by default, promote the importance of music as an entity, and the education behind it that brings it to life.

As we have seen from history, music education has been fighting for its own existence for decades. In 1838, Lowell Mason established the first public school music program in the United States in Boston (*Lowell Mason -- Britannica Academic*, n.d.). Soon after, the debate of music education’s relevancy in public schools began and continues today. Currently we are in a cycle that is more exclusive of music education overall. In American society, this has ebbed and flowed for many years, with formal music education being included and required in public schools, to being optional or even eliminated. As it currently stands, the schools that are thriving are thriving. Alternatively, those that are not, are not. The disparity amongst music education programs across the country is broad and, though we have national standards in place, the lack of requirement for music education consistently across the country somewhat nullifies those standards. The inclusion of music education is necessary.

Backtracking to education as an entity to itself, it was born from a necessity for human survival. As humankind continued (and continues) to evolve, the informal education of merely surviving has morphed into a formal education to fully understand the world around us, how to manage in it, and how to coexist with one another. The primitive need for education has almost entirely gone away, but the premise does hold true; we need to be educated to function in a modernized world. This education can be anything from learning how to drive to the grocery store to learning nuclear reaction to generate power for our homes and businesses. A major difference in modern times is the scale of who needs what specific education. As a music

educator, I know how to convey my craft to my students, how to interact with them, and how to help them become productive members of society. I do not know how to perform major surgery or how to litigate in a court room. Those are educational aspects specific to other humans, just as mine likely are to them. Very few of our bits of educational knowledge are truly based upon survival for ourselves. Instead, our individualized education focuses on such tasks as developing skills for critical thinking, physical labor, creativity, emotional control and release, human interaction, et cetera.

As we have grown as a species, the recognition of these elements has certainly been studied and valued more than our primitive days of hunting, building, and surviving. However, surviving has grown into thriving. To thrive as a species, mankind has learned that more elements are necessary, including a multitude of artforms. In our case, music and the education of music is the focused artform. Humans have learned the emotional, physical, and aesthetic values of music as general practices. One British study found that music education should focus on teaching music to pupils, as music has profound social psychological connotation or adolescents (North et al., 2000). Whether we have decided that music and music education are *necessary* for survival remains unseen.

As mentioned before, I disagree with Christopher Small's "musicking" terminology in that I do not agree that merely hearing music makes you a musician. Do I believe that the listener is a part of the entity of music; yes. Like a sports enthusiast, watching a game does not make you a player of the game. If it enriches your life to be that enthusiast, then it plays a part. Where I feel aligned to Small is that music does affect everyone. It plays roles in our daily happenings, affects our moods, and fills voids that we often do not realize exist. It surrounds our lives. Bennett Reimer's book *A Philosophy of Music Education* and its subsequent editions outline his

philosophy of the openness of music and the feelings it provides as being of the highest importance (2003). One of the feelings mentioned in my philosophy, and personally the most important for me, is confidence. Confidence is a feeling that music can provide. Feeling confident *as* a musician and being confident *because* I'm a musician are different, but both important. Naturally there are moments of weakness in the two, but overall, both are present. I feel this for my students as well and I watch it happen year after year. Additionally, some of the beauty of being a musician lies in the camaraderie. That also instills confidence in musicians of all ages. Estell Jorgensen (2021) writes, "Having experienced joy in musical experience, young and old alike are more likely to recognize and possibly seek it in the rest of human existence" (p. 105). I agree with Jorgensen here as I have yet to meet someone who was involved in formal music education, specifically band, that regrets their participation. David Elliott's stance on music education contains points that I specifically disagree with. Noted music educator Bennett Reimer opposes Elliott's stance "that performance is the essential good and the essential goal" (Reimer, 1996, p. 61). In today's music education world, we certainly do place emphasis on performance. I am guilty too, but that is not to say I am in agreement. There are countless factors that contribute to why performance is so important, especially in the public-school music education world. Concerts, athletic events, community events, and school ceremonies are examples of music education that center around performance. Unfortunately, those expectations create scheduling and time constraints. Would teaching beginning composition to middle school students be a great form of music education? Yes. Do most middle school schedules allow for such a class due to scheduling restraints and state requirements? No. Should that class be an option, it certainly would be a part of the music education process, but it would not necessarily

be rooted in performance. The same could be said for collegiate level music education. A brass methods course being taught at a university level is certainly music education, but it is likely not performance based. The class probably is not going to perform for an athletic event or school function on their secondary brass instruments. Instead, they are learning *how* to teach those instruments to prepare them for teaching public school band classes. It is still music education.

The above philosophy of music education informs my teaching because it motivates me to inspire and instill confidence in my students through the learning, commitment, and performance of music. Students who shoulder the task of learning a musical instrument are given the opportunity to have a skill that pushes their self-conceived boundaries, a skill that teaches them to put a product into the public eye. Being a musician teaches them to be vulnerable, be passionate, and most importantly apply those elements of self-confidence to all aspects of their musical and personal lives.

The lesson presented in this report reflects my teaching philosophy by increasing individual musical confidence in students by providing a different level of musical responsibility through the implementation of small ensembles. Building confidence through music is the premise of my philosophy and when students are challenged to hold their part of a small ensemble up, their overall confidence is increased.

## Chapter 2 - Lesson Plans

Term	Definition in this context
Large ensemble	All players assigned to a specific piece. Ex. all four assigned groups on <i>The Victors</i> rehearsing at the same time.
Medium ensemble	Two of the four groups assigned to a specific piece. Ex. two of the four <i>West Boulevard Rock</i> groups rehearsing at the same time.
Small ensemble	One of the four assigned groups assigned to a specific piece. Ex. one of the four <i>Calypso Morning</i> groups rehearsing.
Full ensemble	The typical full band rehearsing.

**Table 2.1 Terminology**

### Lesson Plan 1

#### Music National Standards (2014)

*Mu:Pr4.1.E.5a – Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the structure of the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual or ensemble.*

*MU:Pr4.2.E.5a Demonstrate, using music reading skills where appropriate, how knowledge of formal aspects in musical works inform prepared or improvised performances.*

#### Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students in this ensemble are in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and in their second year of band instruction, and meet four days per week, Monday through Thursday. During beginning band in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, these students met twice per week in heterogeneous classes. Their knowledge base and skills include simple note reading, fingerings, posture, articulation, simple rhythm reading, and sticking/grip.



They are continuing to develop mature tone production and listening skills. Our district is rural and has approximately 1500 students in grades K-12.

### **Rehearsal Objective**

The objectives for this rehearsal are to introduce small ensembles, explain how they function, establish ensemble leaders, explain/confirm part assignments, and begin working the introductions of each piece. The students are assigned to one of three pieces, with approximately 16 players on each. Within that piece, the ensembles are divided further into trios and quartets based on instrumentation and ability. There are seven percussionists in the class, and they are in an ensemble together. Part assignments are posted on the wall and students find their name and their ensemble leader (listed first on the sheet).

Ensuring student understanding of how the ensembles work is also an objective of today's lesson. As this is their first foray into small ensemble performance, these students need extra explanation of the concept. Additionally, the printed parts contain multiple staves with all parts listed, so students will need to be walked through how to read their specific part.

Following this rehearsal, students will know which small ensemble they are in and who they are playing with. Students will also know who all is in their large ensemble. They will be able to understand their part assignment and role in the ensemble regarding part assignment. Students will know understand how to read their part and will begin playing the opening measures of their piece.

### **Assessment of the Rehearsal**

The goals of this rehearsal were to ensure students understood their part assignment, how to read the music in the multiple-stave format, and how to accurately perform the introductory

measures of their piece. The students learned how these elements worked and how their part functioned in the context of the large ensemble.

Student performances on the first sections of their ensembles were heard and evaluated for accuracy of notes, rhythms, articulations, and tempo. The students rehearsed their ensembles in the large ensemble setting (Table 2.1), with all four small groups rehearsing the piece at the same time. The three pieces will be divided into medium and small ensembles in subsequent lessons. Confirmation of rehearsal objectives occurred when students could perform the first sections of their respective pieces in their large ensemble setting without major issues.

Instructional strategies in this lesson included explanation, questioning and reflection. I went through each piece and explained the layout regarding repeats, etc. as well as how to read multiple staves on a page. Reflection was utilized to ensure students understood the mechanics of the pieces and the structure of the large, medium, and small ensembles.

During the rehearsal, I assessed the students by listening to their large ensembles perform the introduction of their piece. Feedback was given in real time and included suggestions how to improve the piece. Large ensemble progress showed that the students met the rehearsal objectives. As students move forward through the unit, the feedback will aid their personal practice and be conducive to a successful small ensemble performance.

### **Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed**

There are several students in this class on IEP and/or 504 plans. Those students have remained doubled on parts to aid them in their performance. There are also several students who have significant attendance issues including personal transportation challenges, unsupportive family situations, and social anxiety associated with school.

## **Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies**

Students are assigned to one of three ensembles from the book *Festival Ensembles* by Bruce Pearson and Chuck Elledge (Figure 2.1). The book features arrangements for any combination of band instruments, making it flexible for our heterogeneous 7<sup>th</sup> grade band.

Students are assigned to one of the following pieces: *The Victors* (figure 2.2), *West Boulevard Rock* (figure 2.3), or *Calypso Morning* (figure 2.4). Some parts are doubled for numerical, modification, or attendance need.

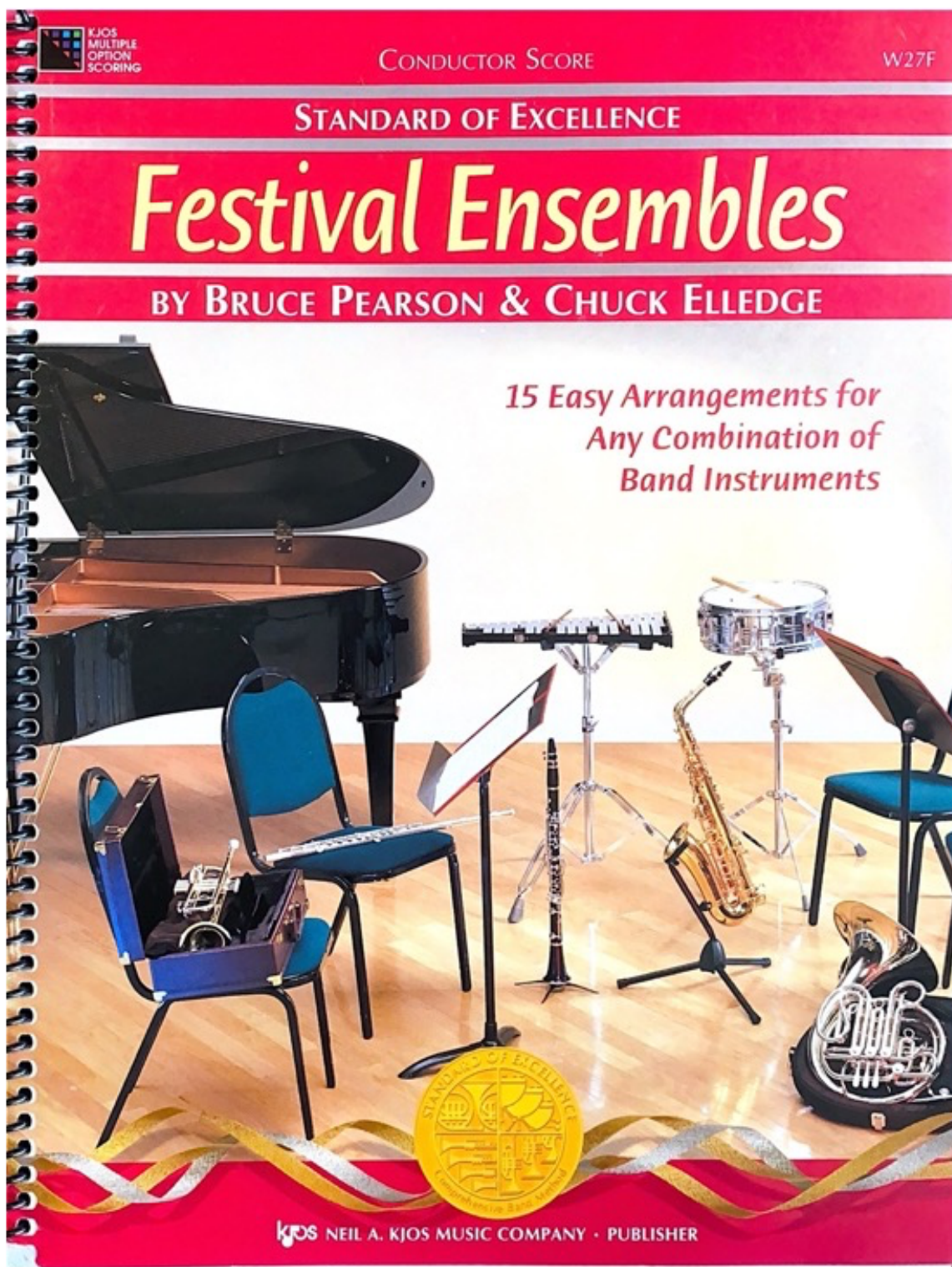


Figure 2.1 – *Festival Ensembles* (Pearson, B. & Elledge, C. 2003)

# THE VICTORS

Louis Elbel (1877-1959)

The musical score for "The Victors" is presented in a multi-staff format. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked "Allegro" and the dynamic is "f" (forte). The score is divided into six measures, numbered 1 through 6. The first system includes three woodwind parts: Flute (A), Clarinet (B), and Bassoon (C). The second system includes three string parts: Violin (A), Violin (B), and Violoncello/Double Bass (C). The third system includes the Percussion section, with staves for Timpani (B-flat and F), Crash Cymbals, Snare Drum, and Bass Drum. The fourth system includes the Piano part, with a chord progression indicated above the staff: N.C. (No Chord), B-flat, N.C., E-flat, F, and C7. The piano part is also marked "Allegro" and "f".

W27F

Figure 2.2 – *The Victors* (Pearson, B. & Elledge, C. 2003)

# WEST BOULEVARD ROCK

Chuck Elledge (b. 1961)  
& Bruce Pearson (b. 1942)

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes three staves labeled A, B, and C. The second system also includes three staves labeled A, B, and C. The third system includes staves for Timpani, Cowbell, Bongos, Suspended Cymbal, Snare Drum, and Bass Drum. The fourth system includes a Piano staff with two staves (treble and bass clef). The score is in 4/4 time and features dynamics such as *f* and *p*. It includes performance instructions like *Allegro* and *G & C*. A box containing the number 3 is present in the right margin of the first three systems. A star symbol is placed above the first staff of the first system at the beginning of the third measure.

\* For solo with piano accompaniment, rest during the introduction, then play **A** beginning at the \*.  
† The suspended cymbal and snare drum should be played by one percussionist.

W27F

Figure 2.3 – West Boulevard Rock (Pearson, B. & Elledge, C. 2003)

# CALYPSO MORNING

Bruce Pearson (b. 1942)

The musical score for "Calypso Morning" is written in 4/4 time and marked "Allegro". It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has three staves labeled A, B, and C. The second system has three staves labeled A, B, and C. The third system includes Triangle\*, Coffee Can, Cowbell, Bongos, Snare Drum, Bass Drum, and Piano. The piano part includes a key signature change from Bb to Cm and a chord progression of Bb, Cm, F7, Bb, F. The score includes dynamic markings like "f" and "snare off".

\* + = dampen o = open  
Dampen the Tri. with one hand while striking the Tri. with the other hand.

W27F

Figure 2.4 – *Calypso Morning* (Pearson, B. & Elledge, C. 2003)

## Rehearsal Plan

### [Lesson Plan 1 Video](#)

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
2 min	Long Tones Bb to F	Warm-up	Daily	Diagnostic
2 min	F Remington Descending	Intonation	Daily	Diagnostic
1 min	F around the room	Intonation	Daily	Diagnostic
1 min	Rhythm counting	Rhythm	Daily	Performance
1 min	Articulation drill	Rhythm	Daily	Performance
4 min	Bb major	Technique	1 <sup>st</sup> key	Diagnostic
4 min	F major	Technique	3 <sup>rd</sup> key	Diagnostic
4 min	Bb chromatic	Technique	Daily	Diagnostic
8 min	Victors 1-4	Introduction	New Material	Formative
8 min	West Boulevard 1-3	Introduction	New Material	Formative
8 min	Calypso Morning 1-5	Introduction	New Material	Formative
1 min	Conclusion/Closing	Daily	Class closing	Summative

**Table 2.2 Rehearsal Plan**

## Lesson Plan 2

### Music National Standards (2014)

*MU:Re8.1.E.5a Identify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works, referring to the elements of music, contexts, and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.*

*MU:Cn10.0.H.5a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.*

### Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students have continued to work on ensembles as well as full band pieces during regular full ensemble rehearsals. Additionally, they have continued to refine tone quality and intonation



through daily exercises. They have also been preparing for spring concert performances, so focus has been spread across numerous musical endeavors.

### **Rehearsal Objective**

The objectives for this rehearsal are to solidify the beginning of each small ensemble using student leaders to count off, ensure each member of the ensemble is able to follow the student-led count off and play together, and to perform approximately half of each piece.

During this lesson, students are rearranged into their small ensemble groups, and each group will rehearse and perform in their medium and small ensembles. The premise behind this division of ensembles is to allow the students the opportunity to become more independent in their small ensembles and feel more comfortable playing without the musical reinforcement from their peers who are playing the same piece of music in the large ensemble. As a result, small ensembles will become self-sufficient and trend towards a cohesiveness that allows them to perform together without the director leading the performance.

I will provide feedback regarding ensemble starts and performances, so students understand how to consistently perform with confidence. With this assistance, students will be able to independently start their medium and small ensembles and successfully perform approximately half of each piece.

### **Assessment of the Rehearsal**

The goals of this rehearsal were to ensure the students could count off their own small ensembles, play together, and perform approximately half of each piece. Additionally, by performing more of the pieces, students were able to self-correct timing issues and also provide peer and self-critique of musical elements.

During this rehearsal, students learned how to effectively start their own ensembles in the medium and small settings and how to stay together without a conductor. They also learned how to use their fellow players to correct timing mistakes in the event they became misaligned during their performance.

Instructional strategies in this lesson included modeling, engagement, and reflection. The students were shown how to count off their medium and small ensembles in a manner that allowed them to be prepared to play their opening notes. Engagement was used during medium ensemble rehearsal as the members of the ensemble not currently playing were able to follow along on their own parts, focusing on musical elements that they may struggle with. Reflection was self-centered and peer-centered, with questions being proposed by the director.

Assessments in this rehearsal were carried out in the form of real time feedback and implementation. There were several instances of students needing assistance from me and being able to turn around and use my feedback to correct mistakes. Peer-assessment and self-assessment were also used both directly and indirectly. Students were questioned about specific musical elements. They were also questioned broadly simply by, “What did you hear?”

As we move forward through the unit, instruction will be adjusted to focus on small ensemble performance versus medium. It will also continue to remove the director as the primary knowledge source and shift toward student based.

Students will meet rehearsal objectives when they can successfully count off their medium and small ensembles, align musically as a unit regarding rhythm, melody, and harmony, and be able to perform approximately half of their respective piece of music.

## Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

There are several students in this class on IEP and/or 504 plans. Those students have remained doubled on parts to aid them in their performance. During this time, we also had a couple of very heavy snowstorms that disrupted some day-to-day operations in the area and also led to a very-rare snow day for our district.

## Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

Students continued to use their ensemble music from *Festival Ensembles* by Bruce Pearson and Chuck Elledge (Figures 2.1 through 2.4). Now that the pieces are becoming more familiar, students have also begun to use other small ensembles as resources and are learning how to peer assess those performances.

## Rehearsal Plan

### [Lesson Plan 2 Video](#)

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
2 min	Long Tones Bb to F	Warm-up	Daily	Diagnostic
2 min	F Remington Descending	Intonation	Daily	Diagnostic
1 min	F around the room	Intonation	Daily	Diagnostic
3 min	F major	Technique	3 <sup>rd</sup> key	Diagnostic
2 min	Bb chromatic	Technique	Daily	Diagnostic
11 min	Victors beginning to 22	Rehearse	Student start	Formative
11 min	West Boulevard beginning to 27	Rehearse	Student start	Formative
11 min	Calypso Morning beginning to 29	Rehearse	Student start	Formative
1 min	Conclusion/Closing	Daily	Class closing	Summative

**Table 2.3 Rehearsal Plan**

## Lesson Plan 3

### Music National Standards (2014)

*MU:Pr5.3.E.8a Develop strategies to address technical challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success using feedback from ensemble peers and other sources to refine performances.*

*MU:Pr6.1.E.8a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music representing diverse cultures and styles.*

### Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students have the knowledge and skills to count off their own ensembles and stay together during the performance. Additionally, they can self-diagnose big-picture mistakes and begin addressing the necessary steps to correct them. They are also developing the skills to reenter the performance group should they happen to get lost in the music.

### Rehearsal Objective

The objective of this rehearsal is to have students perform their small ensemble from start to finish with minimal to zero director intervention. Additionally, students will give some verbal feedback of their performance, identifying areas of strength and areas in need of further attention.

### Assessment of the Rehearsal

The goals for this rehearsal were to have students perform their small ensemble piece in its entirety, or as close to as possible, with minimal director assistance. Students were asked to find their small ensembles and set up together in various locations of their choosing within the room. Students performed their small ensembles from these locations with self-starts.

During this lesson, the students learned how to perform as self-sufficient small ensembles. They also learned how to control dynamics and tempo for all parts to be heard and to stay vertically aligned. They also learned how to self-correct in the event that they (or another player) got lost and dropped out of the ensemble for a period of time.

Assessment of this lesson were in real time and included diagnostic and formative elements. Students were given instructions on how to effectively begin their ensembles and consistently perform them. I will know they have met these objectives through listening assessment during the rehearsal. Assessments were also self-centered and peer-centered. Students were able to accurately diagnose performance issues and offer suggestions on how to either correct them or avoid them entirely.

Instructional strategies in this rehearsal included questioning and problem-solving. Students were asked about their performances from individual and ensemble points. They were able to provide their own feedback and name areas of strength and weakness. Additionally, students were questioned about their peers' performances and were able to articulate similar answers as their self-reflections. Problem-solving was also used as there were some ensembles that had players get lost and need to recover. Some were more successful than others, but each was able to at least diagnose the general issues and understand how to go about correcting during future performances.

Moving forward, I will adjust my teaching practice by including this tiered approach to small ensemble performances earlier in the year and for more grade levels. The individual musical benefits were clear and once the project was moving forward, noticeable progress could be seen. Additionally, that progress carried over into full ensemble rehearsals as well and served to strengthen our band overall.

## Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

There are several students in this class on IEP and/or 504 plans. Those students have remained doubled on parts to aid them in their performance. Due to spring sports, there were also a handful of students missing. However, with the tiered setup of the ensembles, we were able to have a couple of students shift ensembles and cover parts for missing players.

## Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

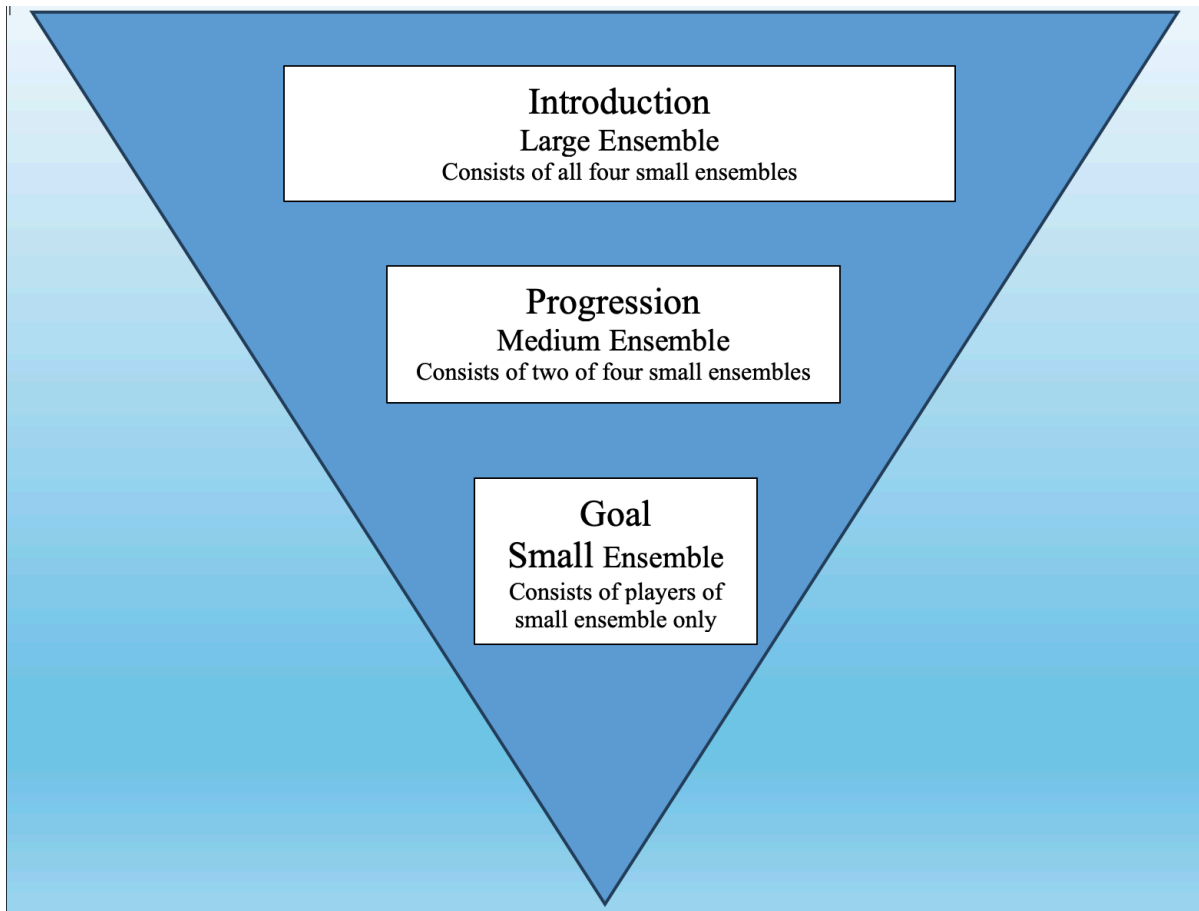


Figure 2.5 – Flowchart of Tiered Direction to Goal

## Rehearsal Plan

[Lesson Plan 3 Video](#)

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Purpose of Activity</b>	<b>Sequence</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
2 min	Long Tones Bb to F	Warm-up	Daily	Diagnostic
2 min	F around the room	Intonation	Daily	Diagnostic
13 min	Victors small ensemble full	Introduction	New Material	Summative
13 min	West Boulevard small ensemble full	Introduction	New Material	Summative
13 min	Calypso Morning small ensemble full	Introduction	New Material	Summative
1 min	Conclusion/Closing	Daily	Class closing	Summative

**Table 2.4 Rehearsal Plan**

## Chapter 3 - Reflections

My teaching has developed through my time and education at Kansas State University in numerous ways, both pedagogically and philosophically. I have found that my deeper dives into the history of music education as an entity have also factored significantly. Some of that influence stands on its own, but much feeds into the philosophical approach to my teaching.

Throughout my master's program, I have found myself constantly reflecting on the question of "why," as it relates to music education, and specifically, to being a band director. Throughout my career, unbeknownst to me, I find that I have had such a targeted focus on the nuts and bolts elements of being a band director that I have not stepped back far enough to see an overview that challenges the "why" of this entity, both from the teacher and student perspectives.

Upon reflecting on my teaching philosophy, and how it affects my approach to music education, I am reminded of the confidence element that was so fundamental to my own progress and development of a student of music. Some of this why was because I simply wanted to be good at something that I perceived as "cool" to both myself and my peers.

As I finish my master's degree at Kansas State, I find myself placing the final touches on my 18<sup>th</sup> year as a band director. One of the "why" elements that I question and reflect on concerns why certain students, and teachers, choose to remain part of the entity of music education. Throughout my career I have had fantastic players who abruptly chose to discontinue their music pursuits. Consequently, I have also had students who struggled year after year yet chose to keep their nose to the grindstone and remain in music throughout middle school, high school, and sometimes beyond.

During Music 807 History of Music Education, I found that the importance of music education as an entity to be recognized and implemented in public schools tends to be cyclic.



Music and the arts are still among the first subjects that schools cut so they can balance their budgets, especially during a politico-cultural swing towards a “back-to-basics” education that focuses on “core” academic subjects (Ludke, 2020). The inclusion of formal music education has been a debated topic since the inception of schools and the discipline itself. Throughout history, the inclusion of music education in schools has varied in both requirement stance and format stance. Still today, conversation is often heard of how it “used to be” or how it was always better before. Through my time and research at Kansas State, I found that some of these trends lasted long enough to potentially span the entire career of a music educator. Theoretically some music educators who spin rhetoric about how things were different before could be in a period of history that has not evolved into the next chapter yet, and they simply are recollecting narratives from others, or unintentionally falsifying their experiences of the profession.

Much of what I have taken from discovering these trends is the importance of persistence. Some people refer it as “keeping your nose to the grindstone.” During about year seven as a band director, I was interviewed for a local publication as I had recently received an educational recognition. I remember the young man who interviewed me being very surprised that I had been in the same position for that many years. I will never forget his surprise and him saying, “None of my friends have had the same job for more than a year or two at most.” Granted he was younger than I was, but not by much. He was in the age bracket of a professional.

Longevity is critical in building a successful music program. One example is the career track of music educator and philosopher Bennett Reimer. Though he held short-tenured positions early in his career, it could be argued that his greatest career impacts were at Case Western Reserve University (1965-1978) and Northwestern University (1978-1997), both positions that

spanned well over a decade each (Hansen, 2014). The time involved to cultivate a program to its true potential can clearly be seen in the history of music education. It can also be said that success breeds success. Both collegiate and professional ensembles throughout the history of modern music education have proven this and I have worked to implement this mindset into my own middle school program. Even as young musicians, excellence can be implemented into daily routine in the program, from how students play to how they conduct themselves in and out of the classroom. Building great musicians and building great people are parallel ventures.

The self-confidence element that accompanies being a musician is something that I have learned to lean into even more during my time at Kansas State. As society continues to recognize the importances in acknowledging and navigating different elements regarding mental well-being, music has proven to be a positive channel for many of my students. One 7<sup>th</sup> grade student comes to mind this year who has struggled with social anxiety in late elementary years and all through 6<sup>th</sup> grade last year. Not only has this student excelled in the band program at our school, she also joined the newly added jazz band program. This student is playing a secondary instrument in the jazz program and asked for an improv solo for our spring concert. Last year this student struggled to come to school, and on the days she was there, making it through the full day was questionable at best. Now she has band, and band has her. She is even attending a summer music camp this year at a university in our state. Graciously her parents have thanked me, but what I did was stay persistent and cultivate a program that fosters excellence. She did the work and she earned the credit.

Through implementation of the jazz program, I have provided the opportunity for students to learn both a secondary instrument and a secondary genre. Before my time at Kansas State, I approached middle school band directing with a more narrow-minded focus, keeping

students in the corral of playing their primary instrument only. I felt there was so much to cover already, that adding a secondary instrument at such a young age would only serve as a distraction for progress. What I have found is it has worked oppositely, generating not only interest in another instrument, but also increasing skill on the primary.

Though the jazz program implementation is not the focus of my project, it ties into the self-confidence and individual musical responsibility elements of my ensemble project perfectly. Studying for my master's degree at Kansas State has taught me the value in broadening my teaching approach from being full ensemble centered to being individually centered. I have always felt like my ability to build individual relationships in order to connect with students has been strong. The newfound ability to truly connect musically on an individual level through these confidence building ensembles will undoubtedly continue to have a positive effect on my students and in turn, the music program as a whole.

As mentioned, I have learned that trends in music education are cyclic. Length, depth, and frequency of cycles vary greatly and sometimes it can be difficult to understand which trend we are in. Additionally, there are geographic variances that can be influenced by anything ranging from public school funding to privatization of schools to professional opportunity, or lack of. Religious and political trends can also influence the state of music education in academia and promote or restrict which elements are permissible, at least on the surface level. The question of how and when to push those limits is up for debate. It can be agreed upon though that the push for inclusion of music education in academic structure is ongoing. As professionals in the industry, it is up to us to remain vigilant, persistent, and articulate on the importance of music education for our well-being as a species. Music philosopher Christopher Small (1998) says:

So many different settings, so many different kinds of action, so many different ways of organizing sounds into meanings, all of them given the name *music*. What is this thing called music, that human beings the world over should find in it such satisfaction, should invest in it so much of their lives and resources?" (p. 2).

I can say, for myself, that music is how we learn to be alive. For many of us, and many that we educate, it could also be the reason to move forward; the reason behind newly discovered self-confidence; a self-confidence that propels a shy little boy into a life that he didn't realize was achievable before he picked up an instrument and started making something from nothing.

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