

Guide to band/orchestra directing in Washington

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Band/Orchestra Mentors

(Even though this is something you understand, you will need people who understand where you are at this moment in time)

- Respected Teachers in Community, master teacher, professors, experts on each instrument.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

Orchestra Mentors (Yes you are teaching orchestra to high school students)

- Ron Jones (360) 452-1601 (Port Angeles – State “teacher of the year” – orchestra - and former Pasco grad)
 - He can do it all, and has for 35 years
 - You will want to get literature ideas from him immediately
- JoDee Ahmann (360) 477-0203 Suzuki Trainer (and beloved aunt)
 - Great resource for solo and ensemble as well as string technique
- Sarah Berglund (509) 94709913 (fellow string teacher (feeders) in Richland)
- Kirk Moss (former president of ASTA) kdross@unwsp.edu
- Julia Salerno (EWU Violin/Viola Prof) salernoviolin@gmail.com

Guitar Mentors (Wow! You get to do it all)

- Matthew Polk (509) 948-4262 – mpolk@psd1.org
- Kyle Smith (509) 460-9745
- _____
- _____

Sound Engineering Mentors:

- Brook Floyd (Rainmaker Studios)
- Eddie Ramirez (Zerimar Music)
- Dan Hansen (Nashville Engineer based in Vancouver)
- _____
- _____

Year 1 - Congratulations on your first job!

Things that will endear you to your building administration

- If you can take care of your classroom issues your building administration will love you!
- Get your travel permissions in to the right office, on time!
- Do your attendance – everyday
- Monitor your students entering and exiting the classroom
- Be in the halls at passing time (tough to do when you are trying to fix a clarinet/violin)
- Have an opinion but don't shove it down their throat
- Be a team player
- Protect the reputation of the school in everything you do

Things that will endear you to the students

- Students want to know you care about them on a personal level – look for ways to give them a compliment
- A compliment to a problem student can be powerful magic! (Sometimes you must dig deep to find a way)
- Acknowledge the students that are smarter than you (Insist upon their loyalty and never put up with arrogance)

- Be organized – Students respond well to a routine
- Be fair – You will have favorites but they should never know it
- Reward Good Behavior
- Punish students while maintaining a cool-calm demeanor (almost always privately)
- Be Cool
- Acknowledge their opinions and help them understand why it is valid or needs reconsideration.
- You know when to have fun – “WORK HARD - PLAY HARD”
- Make yourself a valuable part of their education – If you do not bring rigor to them they will have gained little from you – You represent new learning
- You try to understand their feelings
- Teach life through music
- ALWAYS HAVE A REASON!

General Advice

- Never make big decisions when you are tired!!!!
- Avoid conflict when you are exhausted
- Love your neighbor as your self
- Remember the “my own child” perspective” – What would I do if this were my child?
- Be giving and forgiving
- Be fair, firm, and friendly
- Don’t be afraid to be nice
- Don’t be afraid to smile
- Laugh when something is funny
- Cry when you share someone’s pain
- Don’t have stupid rules

So Where Do I Start?

August

Everything begins

General expectations

- Create your expectations for outside of class practice routines for all students
- What is your discipline plan?
 - Tap into the school discipline policy
 - Set high standards early
 - Have a goal setting conversation with students.
 - What have you learned from your past experience that can help you now?
 - Trust your instincts
 - Know the difference between dangerous behavior and “stupid kid stuff”
 - If you can take care of your classroom issues your building administration will love you!
- Find out where to get the forms you need
 - Turn in a “**Permission to Travel**” form that needs to be approved by the school board (usually for out of district or overnight trips) this is usually needed at least a month prior to the trip. I suggest you turn in the requests for all trips at the beginning of the year. Take the time to do it early and make a note in your calendar that you have submitted them.
 - “**Student travel permission**” forms” – student/parent signatures required
 - Protocol?
 - “**Risk of Injury**” forms (Marching Band) see your athletic director’s secretary
 - Permission to take students out of class for a field trip
 - How does this work?
 - Ask the head secretary (they know everything, most of the time).
- Plan your first concert
 - Consider the educational goals you have set for the class
 - Consider your audience (They will affirm your work if you consider their wants)
 - Variety, Variety, Variety
 - What season is it, and how does that effect audience expectations and attendance?
 - Don’t over-program
 - People don’t need long concerts
 - Have a good reason to give a concert
 - Try to make sure that every student is successful
- Have a plan for assigning lockers

- Where do the locks come from – are we locking them
- Seniors first? Bigger Instrument folks first?
- Develop student leaders
 - Marching Band drum majors
 - Class officers
 - Section leaders for all groups
 - Next year – plan to send leaders to camp
 - Student Conductors-Establish protocol for when you are gone.
- Decide if you are going to have an audition process
 - Do we have a chairing process in place
 - What has been done in the past
- What awards do we give at the end of the year? Plan ahead
 - John Phillip Sousa Band Award
 - Louis Armstrong Jazz Award
 - National Orchestra Award
 - Outstanding class member awards

All of these awards are copyright protected so you have to go through the organizing company. It's expensive!

Concert Bands

- Literature for the year (you can modify as you go)
 - Warm up material
 - Song selections
 - Assemble your recordings to demo
 - Begin to formulate a concert program with good variety
- Create a rehearsal routine
- Plan Guest Conductors/Clinicians (college professors are great)
- Plan Festivals for the year (should be done a year in advance)
- Call the bus company for quotes or use district buses (most districts have a bus person) charters are preferably for instrument transport.

Jazz Ensemble

- Literature for the year (you can modify as you go)
 - Warm up material
 - Song selections
 - Assemble your recordings to demo
 - Begin to formulate a concert program with good variety
- Have a plan to develop improvisation
 - You will want to have entry level activities for everyone
 - I focused the most energy on the most interested students – high level learners
 - Depends on their process through the program
 - Younger bands have solo by committee in general.
 - This is a giant skill – can be an all-consuming fire for the students who work at it
- Create a rehearsal routine
- Plan Festivals for the year
- Call the bus company for quotes or use district buses
- Plan a guest conductor or three?

Marching Band

- Order your buses for marching band competition
- Make sure your registration forms are sent in for all of your competitions or festivals (Call if you don't know)
- Talk to your booster president immediately or find the names of three parent volunteers who have been active in the past: _____, _____, _____
 - Is marching band a club or activity?
 - Can you charge fees?
 - Water for marching band camp
 - Gather student info, permission to travel, and risk of injury forms from students and parents – Create notebooks for travel purposes
 - Uniforms – Sizing, alterations, fitting, trip management
 - Trip planning, food etc.

- Dot contracts for students to gain commitment.
- Chaperones for the early trips – You want parents to take ownership
- Monitor the motel rooms on trips so you can sleep
 - Or decide to not do overnight trips

Orchestra

- Friendly(common) Keys: A, G, D, C...
- Mix up group within sections to establish seating and parts
 - Rehearse in a circle
 - Rotate seating every day (for a period of time)
 - Make sure you listen to the back-row players.
 - Rehearse in Quartets
- Sectionals: Need to be taught
 - Things to cover: Bowings, bow placement, bow lanes, bow angle.
 - Rhythms
 - Memorization
- Two general setups: Left-Right: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello/V1, Cello, Viola, V2
 - Be creative and do what's best for your group and the music
- Focus on Intonation, students “Can” play in tune.
 - Tune with chords, scales, intervals, fundamental drones, singing

August

Teacher meetings/New teacher orientation

School Starts

September

Call an extra rehearsal (isn't that what Saturday is for?)

Consider an “ice breaker” – “get away” for your orchestra or jazz kids. It can help develop the same sort of identity as your marching band kids get from marching.

- Go to a nearby hotel or event center (expensive=school works fine)
- Get ideas from your mentors for activities
- Rehearse – Never forget that great performances build trust on the part of your students and foster confidence from parents which leads to support for everything you are trying to accomplish
- Can a guest conductor help get things going?
- Pool Party!
- FOOD!!!!

Is your first concert coming along well?

Call the bus company (or administrator) to verify trips and departure – arrival times (multiple times)

Do you have all of the student permission forms turned in?

Have students paid and registered for the trip? (We use FamilyID)

October

Are you ready for the concerts?

How are the competitions going (Marching Band)?

All State/NW Honor group recordings are due early October.

Preparing for possible festivals(orchestra) at the end of the month.

November

Concerts early in November if you are doing a Holiday/Christmas concert.

Orchestra Festival or Jazz Festival

December

Are you doing a Holiday/Christmas concert?

Beware of weather. It's common for December concerts and event to be cancelled depending where you live.

If you don't do a Holiday/Christmas concert, you can get the kids working on Solo/Ensemble music.

What kind of stupid things can kids do?

- They will lie to protect their image
- They will forge a note
- They will lie to protect a friend
- Not show up for class
- Be late for class
- Not practice
- Not care what grade you give them
- Care too much what grade you give them
- Flirt with you
- Hate you
- Love you
- Crawl out the emergency exit doors on the roof of the bus (freshman@*^#!)
- Sit on someone's lap on the bus, and enjoy it too much
- Not listen to you
- Not follow directions the first time given
- Not hear anything you say – ever!
- Leave their equipment or music out everyday
- Drink cough syrup to get high
- Get high
- Come to school drunk
- Keep drugs in their instrument locker
- Get pregnant – (Hopefully not on a school trip)
- Need to leave to get a family member out of jail
- My brother is too drunk to drive home, can I go get him (Yes but you must wait until after half-time)
- Sell their school instrument at a pawn shop
- Run over their instrument with the car
- Fake an injury to get out of marching
- Plan a drinking party in the motel room

- Sneak out of their motel room on a school trip
- Poop in the tank of the toilet at Disneyland
- Not pay their fees

January

Valuable time for preparing the festival music

Solo/Ensemble time: Solo/Ensemble Unit!!!!

Check with transportation that the busses are confirmed for ALL festivals.

February

Solo Ensemble Date

All State/All Northwest Presidents weekend

Does the district pay for it?

Do you have to pay for it?

Ask your building or district if they have Professional Development \$\$\$\$?

March = CRAZY

Festivals! Confirm your bus for each trip multiple times.

Register regional solo/ensemble for state.

April

Festivals?

State Solo/Ensemble

May

Testing/Testing/Testing

Final Concerts

Awards: Ceremony or at concert (in class).

What traditions do they have or what do you want to create?

June

Graduation

Inventory: What does the school own? Insurance issues and organization.

Check out procedures?

Encouraging words

You will have the opportunity to impact the lives of every student who enters your classroom. Don't shy away from the "odd duck." One of my favorite days was related to a young man that I read (from outside appearances) as a disinterested, "loser" type. I was seeking class assistants to help manage all of the dirty side jobs that are endless in a music classroom. Guess who volunteered? For four years he rocked as a helper! He never became a great musician but I didn't care. His gift of service was amazing!

Odd Details

- How do I handle certification issues now that I have my first job? (Call the ESD in your area)
- When do I need to go back to school to upgrade my certification?
- Do I need clock hours?
- Now that I am a teacher when do I get my first paycheck?
- Now that I am a teacher, what benefits do I have?
- Are there extra duty stipends?
 - Do I have years of experience that count towards this?

Chris' First Year Lessons

- Get to know your administration and especially your supervisor
 - Learn how they function (Are they a micro-manager?)
 - What is important to them is important to you!
- Find the balance of old and new. (Don't be afraid to ask how things were done in the past.)
- Have a reason for everything you do!
- Don't do too much. Often times the schedule is laid out before you are hired. Don't be afraid to alter some events. Make sure you find out what the "traditional" events are. Cancelling these may not be beneficial in a first year.
- Get to know your office secretaries! They find your subs and deal with your purchases in most cases.
- Be down to earth but have high standards. Work hard but have fun.
- Promote "team"! This helps with discipline! "Is what you are doing benefiting the team?"

- Get familiar with ASB rules and regulations ASAP. Is it a big deal to your ASB people?

Dealing with Funny moments?

I think that we are all aware that in our culture we are overwhelmed by colloquialisms and double-entendres that often cause for laughter or embarrassment. As a first year teacher I was surprised by the number of times there was an awkward or potentially awkward moment in class. A music classroom is often a breeding ground for Sexual innuendos, “that’s what she said” jokes, or other awkward moments with students. It’s important that you are aware of this but also important that you know how to appropriately handle such circumstances. Here are some examples of things students have said.

- Do we put birth-control down on this form when it asks for medication?
- Mr. Newbury, I climaxed three times on that run through.
- I’m gay! But I kissed a girl and I kind of liked it.
- Orchestra T-Shirt Idea (Orchestra is Delicious!)
 - Insert picture!!!

It is important as a teacher, that you are aware of the moment. Otherwise the students will continue to try and push the envelope. I think that the teacher’s job is to move the class on from these moments as quickly as possible.

Mistakes I’ve Made

- Yell and scream at a student for leaving his drum in the parking lot! The seriousness was good but I made a spectacle in front of numerous people. I should have disciplined him privately.
- Thinking students can handle independent study or practice.
- Reprimanding students publicly. Never regret a private conversation after class.

How to deal with ASB Budgets!

- What is curricular?
- What is non-Curricular?
- Co-Curricular?
- Russ’ Handout

Booster Club

- **Do you need them?**
- **Do they already exist?**
- **Bi-Laws?**

- **Monthly Meetings?** I recommend you go to all the meetings at first, then work on trying to “not” go to all of them.

Vision Statement

- **Why do you do what you do?**
- **What’s your 30 second elevator speech?**
- **What’s your vision for your program?**
- **Create one with the students**