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The Hat of a



Ringmaster

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The Hat of a Ringmaster

The hat of the ringmaster is the first and most important hat of them all. As an educator striving for excellence, you must often don the top hat of the ringmaster while at the same time continuing to manage your own three-ring circus. Once this hat is mastered, you will be able to easily handle the diverse abilities and activities found in the typical music classroom.

As a teacher, you may be thinking, “In ring one, we have a group of students who are working on advanced music concepts with a new music software program. In ring two, we have Mary and James, who were recently ill and need to take their make-up exams. In ring three, a small group of students needs additional help with sight reading.” To top it off, in the back of your mind you hear, “Now ladies and gentlemen, we have wait-

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ing to enter the tent the remainder of our class as they return from their research project in the library. They will be moving into ring...”

Great teachers are organized. They make sure that each ring is full and active. Well-organized teachers have effectively mastered lesson plans, to-do lists and time management, and they avoid procrastination at all costs. By mastering these four skills, organization will naturally follow and the result will be a reduction or elimination of discipline problems, as well as an ability to keep all the activities in your room going strong.

Lesson Plans

Outstanding teachers have a well-prepared, written lesson plan. Master teachers often spend an extensive amount of time preparing and writing detailed, innovative lessons. By having the lesson well prepared, the teacher is able to mentally run through it, add or delete content, and practice the delivery, thus eliminating potential problems. By doing so, you not only ensure the success of that one lesson, you now have a well-developed lesson to use year after year.

A teacher that doesn't properly prepare and “shoots from the hip” tends to face a lack of respect and interest from the students, and will often have discipline problems in the classroom. In addition, the students quickly notice whether the teacher is prepared and will tend to model his or her behavior. So, practice what you preach. If you want your students to do their homework, then you need to do your homework before the lesson.

To-do List

A comprehensive to-do list helps keep the teacher on task. Unlike the written lesson plan, this is an abbreviated list of what is to be covered or accomplished today. This essential list can serve as a road map to ensure that all major points and concepts are covered.

You will find this list to be extremely helpful if a discipline problem should arise and your focus temporarily changes. The list allows you to get right back on track. By keeping your daily lists, you will also be able to easily review what was covered in class to assist a student who was absent.

Time Management

Efficient use of classroom time is an absolute necessity because dead time in the classroom creates opportunities for discipline problems. It is imperative that you use every moment of class time for instruction, review, practice, work, etc. If you as the teacher do not value every moment of class time, your students will not value it either. The safest way to keep students focused and on track is to prevent them from getting off track.

How can you punish a student for being late to class if you don't start class on time? The best answer to this obviously rhetorical question is that you, the teacher, should be on time and require the students to always be on time. The teacher that permits students to be a minute late the first week of school will find that the one minute will increase to two, then three, then ten. The best teachers plan and use every moment of the time allocated each day.