

## Help Your Students Be Successful at All-Region/All-State Tryouts

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**“Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals.”**

**Vince Lombardi**

- ❖ Start preparing for tryouts your students' first day in band as beginners.
  - Help them have the best equipment possible.
    - The instrument **MUST** be in good playing condition.
    - Mouthpieces and reeds are **VERY** important. Your students may not be able to own a professional model instrument but they can have a quality mouthpiece and quality reeds. They are just as important. Avoid stock mouthpieces that came with the instrument.
  - Stress tone production from day one. Technique will come through maturity but bad embouchures are difficult to correct. Make them do it correctly from the beginning.
  - They can not hear “**MORE AIR**” enough.
  - Play for them often or have recordings of great players so they can have a concept of how they need to try to sound. **Tone! Tone! Tone!**
  - As soon as they can produce a decent sound and play line #1, start having a fun competition day each week or two. It is important that they see how they measure up to each other and this also allows you to assess their level of achievement. Again, this must be a fun time for young players. Learning to cope with the pressure of a tryout situation is an important part of their musical development.
  - If a student is struggling, determine ASAP if they are on the correct instrument for them and do not hesitate to change. If they seem to be practicing but are having some fundamental problems, let them and their parents know that you are available before school, after school, at lunch, etc. to help.

**“Don't ask for a light load, but rather ask for a strong back.” Dr. William D. Revelli**

- ❖ Preparing Music - *Play it right, play it right lots of times, play it right under pressure*
  - Technique
    - Start early on the music. It can often times be overwhelming - bite off little chunks at a time. Time is on your side. Get music and a recording into their hands as early as you can.
    - Start slowly and gradually work up to indicated speed. The exercise is much easier to learn once than to keep relearning it because you have done it incorrectly.
    - Faster is not better - better is better!
    - Make sure each note speaks clearly and is not a blur.
    - Get a good characteristic sound in all ranges of the instrument.
    - Prepare expressive parts as carefully as you do technical ones - making music is the name of the game.

- Mark your breath marks - get used to doing them in the same places all the time in order to make good phrases.
- Be prepared to start at any point in an exercise - beginning, middle, end, etc.
- Be familiar and confident enough with the music so you can keep going no matter what happens.
- Practice the parts you can't play. Practice difficult passages with mixed/dotted rhythms. This helps break the monotony and develops better motor skill development.
- *In the room* - play the first note of each exercise - it helps to relax you and gives you a chance to make sure you are getting the best sound.

**“It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself.” J.S. Bach**

➤ Scales

- Know your @#\*^%(\*\_ scales!
- Practice the hard ones and learn them early.
- Practice scales in major/minor relationships - A major/f#minor - they often use the same fingering patterns.
- Vary the rhythms and articulations.
- Practice fingering them while doing other things.
- Practice flat scales one day and sharp scales the next.
- *In the room* - finger through each scale before you play it. Play the first note. Hold the last note out 2 counts so they can hear your great tone.

➤ Sight-Reading - Yes you can practice sightreading!

- Play duets with them. Play lots of music. Practice sightreading – you will improve.
- Establish a beat.
- The Golden Rule: DON'T STOP!
- STARS - in 20-30 seconds
  - S - Sharps and Flats
  - T - Time Signature
  - A - Accidentals and Articulations
  - R - Rhythm
  - S - Signs
- *In the room* - play the first note. Mentally do a count-off just like a director does out loud (down-up, down-up, ready, play).
- Two students who couldn't sight-read line one of the beginner book learned to do so and were three year first band all-staters.

**“When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.”  
Franklin D. Roosevelt**

❖ You've got to hear them! - *Come early and stay late.*

➤ Students – **Remember, you are teaching students, not just music.**

- Everyone is different – find what works for each student.
- If you depend on them to get it all done – you, and they, will be disappointed.
- Work in small groups.
- Encourage private lessons. Seek out those who can help come do a master class at your school. These are people who have helped Southside students with master classes:

*Kelly Johnson*

*Andy Anders*

*John Henley*

*Jack Jackson*

*Ken and Karen Futterer*

*Dan Woodward*

*David Ewing*

*Tim Howe*

*Gary Barrow*

*Tom Flocks*

*Marcus Young*

*Kevin Sanders*

*Bob Bright*

*Stan Cate*

*Prissy Buchanan*

*Stan Morris*

*Richard Peer*

*Amy Hinkson*

- Use the try-out sheet to let them see how they are doing. Pick parts of the music likely to be asked, give them time to prepare it, and then score them. Let them keep their score sheets and see if they improve. The score sheets show how much time they should spend on each element.
- Keep a note book. Tara Braddy played this for me on this date - this was good - this wasn't. It saves time and keeps them accountable.
- Use mock auditions to help students. They need to simulate the try-out experience. Pressure makes us all do things we have never done before. Prepare your nerves. Example: Clarinet Day Experience
- Challenges and chair tests. Provide them with CDs of the music.

➤ Teacher - **Know your stuff - know those you are trying to stuff - stuff them.**

- Listen to experts perform the music. CDs are a great resource.
- Call people and ask for help. How do you do that part? Is there a better way to teach this? Are there any alternate fingerings? etc.
- You need to listen to your students each week on their material. A structured approach works best for most people.
- Assign the material to be played for you with some kind of accountability such as a grade or points. Like-instrument sectionals each week work well. You can listen to around 20 – 25 students in under an hour by taking a small sampling on an exercise and have them play two to three assigned scales from memory.
- Involve parents in this process by communicating with them about why and how you are doing this. Stress that this is meeting Arkansas State Instrumental Music Frameworks and is a course of study designed to teach their student musical skills on their instrument. Tryouts, either at home or on the region level, are their assessment. Let them know that mastery is not necessarily the objective; gradual improvement from week to week is what matters through a regular practice time at home each day. Emphasize achievement, no matter how small.

- Let them know that it is more fun to play music when you have worked hard and can do it well. **REWARD IMPROVEMENT!** Call parents and let them know that their student is doing well.

**“I’m a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.”  
Thomas Jefferson**

❖ *Coda*

- Tradition - **Students will support what they help to build.**
  - Tradition means more than you realize.
  - Build a tradition. Success breeds success.
  - It is not about making All-Region or All-State, it is about doing your best. We will be just as happy for some who simply choose to try-out as we will for those who are 1<sup>st</sup> chair All-State. *Play like a champion today!!!*
  - Give them a little “treat” for good luck before try-outs. This will show them that you care and they will get a kick out of it.
  - All-Region/All-State Experience - they should want to come back and do it again and again. Choose good clinicians and let them have fun. There is nothing more encouraging than being around your peers who love to make music.
  - Sophomores can contribute a great deal! Keep the ones who are excelling going in the right direction. Point others that way.
  - Make sure that you get local publicity that recognizes your All-Region and All-State players. A little recognition at a school board meeting or an article in the paper can go a long way.
  - Don’t just play tryout material and contest pieces all year. Provide opportunities for students to learn solos and play in small ensembles, just for fun. Jazz band is a great way to develop “chops” and sight-reading ability. The sooner they find out that playing their musical instrument is fun, the more they will play and the better they will get.

**“100% of the shots you don’t take don’t go in.” Wayne Gretzky**

- Be consistent in your requirements from year to year and students WILL achieve. They will get excited, their parents will get excited, and your community and school administration will get excited when they see the improvement of your band through this tryout process. **GOOD LUCK AND HAVE A GREAT SCHOOL YEAR!**

**“It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows achievement and who at the worst if he fails at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls – who know neither victory nor defeat.” Theodore Roosevelt**