

Ready, Steady, Set, and Sparkle: Rehearsal Strategies for the Young and the Restless

By Cheryl Floyd

These strategies work well in our band program and have helped us take our students from “0 to 60” in three short years. These same strategies can work for you.



READY

◆ **Be prepared - know your scores.**

Learn the score before you start teaching it to your ensemble. Students know if you are “flying by the seat of your pants.” Use a highlighter to mark changes in tempo, key, meter.

◆ **Allow for personal study time in your daily schedule.**

Listen to recordings. Ask for input from more experienced teachers.

◆ **Write it down.**

My lesson plans are a check list of things that I plan to accomplish in rehearsal.

◆ **Get your room ready.**

Chairs, stands, and percussion equipment should all be in place prior to rehearsal. Students respond much better to order than chaos! Use student leadership to accomplish this if you need to.

How will you disperse new music? Section leader pick-up? Be sure parts are in assigned music slots or in student’s chairs.

◆ **Practice sight reading often!**

A good text for sight reading practice is 204 Progressive Sight Reading Tunes by Roger Winslow.

◆ **Build technical skills.**

Determine which skills your students need, i.e. range issues for brass players, percussion techniques, etc. If your trombone and baritone students must play a Bb at the top of the staff in Little Drummer Boy for the Holiday concert, work on extending their range a month ahead of time.

STEADY

◆ **Rehearse and teach the same way every day.**

A routine is critical, especially for middle school students.

- ◆ **Use a consistent warm-up routine.**
Try Remington warm-ups and lip slurs followed by scales. Also use a chorale everyday and teach tuning. Use a metronome during warm-up.
- ◆ **A “Key a day.”**
Focus on one key a day during warm-up.
- ◆ **Do sectionals before or after school.**
If you have an assistant, have them work with small groups during class.
- ◆ **Use a steady, calm tone of voice all the time.**

SET

- ◆ **Have students make practice recordings.**
Use mp3, CD, or cassette format. I give constructive comments at the end of each student’s recording.
- ◆ **Do frequent performances.**
Concerts, football games and pep rallies all build confidence. Get performances on the school calendar early. Check frequently for school calendar changes.
- ◆ **Try peer teaching.**
Choose some of your most responsible students for peer teaching. This can be an extremely effective option.

SPARKLE

Concerts should be celebrations. If you have planned and prepared well, there should be no pre-performance panic ever! Let your enthusiasm and passion for teaching show. Students will reciprocate with their best effort.



Cheryl Floyd is in her eighteenth year as Director of Bands at Hill Country Middle School in Austin, Texas. Mrs. Floyd is a nationally recognized educator, conductor, and clinician whose ensembles have been featured at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic and have been recipients of the coveted Sudler Cup of Honor, presented to the “best of the best” in instrumental music. Cheryl was the first middle school band director elected for membership in the American Bandmasters Association. A champion for new music, Cheryl has a long list of collaborations with internationally recognized composers.

Don’t miss Cheryl at this year’s 2009 Midwest Clinic.