

## **Address core musicianship issues concisely + individualize support and assessment.**

*Clark Chaffee, director*

Many directors typically spend a high percentage of rehearsal time fixing problems rather than furthering musical nuance. The majority of those problems have to do with either wrong rhythms (or vertical alignment at a more advanced level) and/or intonation. Really a combination of wrong rhythms + wrong notes (out of the key signature or lack of connecting note names to instrument locations) + poorly developed pitch matching.

A serious investment in teaching core musicianship concepts through curriculum development/ implementation + individualization of training and mastery assessment will pay off many times over through reduction in rehearsal time devoted to remediation.

The first three items we seen the page are often ignored. Address them aggressively and see your rehearsal time get more efficiently in a hurry.

#1. The clef - players should be expert at naming note within and up to 3 ledger lines above and below the staff.

#2. The key signature - there are only 15 key signatures - ever & for everyone. It is actually easier to master all 15 than just a few. With an effective teaching trick or two, it takes little time to master major and minor "Do" identification for each of the 15.

#3. The time signature - Nearly all printed music has either 2, 3, or 4 beats per bar with eighth, quarter, half or dotted quarter getting one beat. Nearly all printed music divides the beat into 2, 3 or 4 parts. This challenge is manageable.

Programs that build a curriculum around addressing these fundamental issues and individualize learning support and grade computation are far more successful than those that don't. Attempting to address core issues en masse keeps 20% engaged, terrifies 40% ("I'm going to fail at this again!"), and bores to tears the remaining 40%. Setting aside a few days per month to allow individualized student support and mastery assessment will pay big rewards in many ways.

Summary: Address core musicianship issues concisely + individualize support and assessment.

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Mr. Chaffee is 'retired', currently helping 3 high school band/orchestra programs with curriculum development. His primary professional instrument area is percussion. Served as Principal Timpani in the Elgin Symphony (IL) for 20 years & has done extensive work as a band leader/drummer in jazz and pop ensembles. Conducted 30+ musical theater productions. His primary focus throughout his career was developing orchestra programs in public schools - mostly in the Chicago area. He retired from his position as head of strings at AE Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire IL. For over 15 years there the string program grew from 33 to 200. Within 3 years after his retirement it was up to nearly 400 strings (the school has 4400 students). The entire Fine Arts Program at Stevenson has earned numerous local, state, and national citations of excellence. He served as head of the orchestra division of the Illinois MEA for 5 years and as All State percussion coordinator for 10 years before that.