

KEY CHANGES: REFRESHING YOUR MUSIC PROGRAM

Management Potential

A Purposeful and Passionate Plan for Managing the Music Classroom

For my third professional teaching assignment, I was asked to establish a music program at a brand-new middle school. My mission required me to inspire students who had been affiliated in total with 27 previous music programs. Had I not formulated a vision for the new program and created a motto for success (see last month's column), then my ability to manage such a diverse classroom would have been difficult, exhausting, perhaps impossible.

However, the power of a motto doesn't just emerge magically from reciting it. I have to believe in it, live it, and teach its inspirational message each day—and I have to be consistent in managing my students and their behaviors.

In a well-managed classroom, routines are always evident and can serve many functions. If implemented purposefully, routines can enhance organization, eliminate chaos, ensure safety, focus students' attention, and save time. If implemented passionately, routines can also unite students. When they follow directions as a cohesive unit, students perform more musically as an ensemble, and when a sense of community is achieved, students are motivated to maintain it.

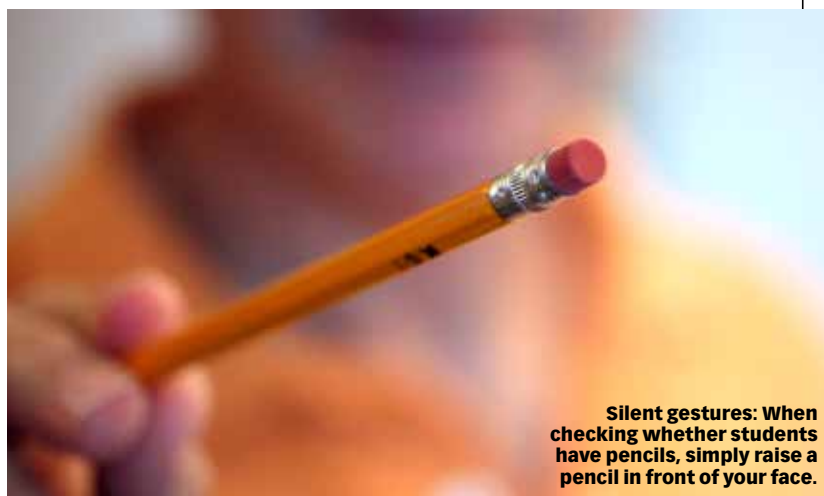
Set the standard of excellence in your classroom before making music. Envision how students will respectfully enter your classroom. Be prepared with procedures for how this will look and sound. Which door will students use to enter the classroom? How will they obtain materials, where will they rest their belongings, when and where can they assemble instruments, and where should they store cases? Model the behaviors you

expect from your students within each phase of the class period. Demonstrate the routine. This will ensure your students' safety, along with the safety of their instruments.

Develop a pattern for posting each lesson agenda. If you have access to a computer and LCD projector, create your agenda in a slide show format. By doing so, you can update the slides at your convenience, rather than having to physically be in your classroom to erase or write on a board. The daily agenda should include materials to be used, vocabulary to be reviewed, methods for warming up and tuning,



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Silent gestures: When checking whether students have pencils, simply raise a pencil in front of your face.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit."

—ARISTOTLE

literature to be rehearsed, and announcements to be shared. Be certain that each student can see the projected agenda from all angles of the classroom. If you notice anyone standing or straining to see, then request for the black, smart, or white board to be raised in height or moved elsewhere.

Consider playing a different musical recording each day as students enter your classroom. This technique can excite them, calm them, or focus their attention on a musical question. It also trains students to achieve proper audience etiquette, by listening silently when music is performed.

If you expect your ensemble members to become silent listeners and focused observers when you stand on the conductor's podium, then model this behavior too. Practice stepping on and off of the podium while

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students are seated in an ensemble setting. Demonstrate to your students what behaviors should look and sound like when a conductor steps off of the podium and how behaviors immediately improve when a conductor steps on the podium. Relax your body and converse with a student in the first row while you are standing on the floor. The moment you stand on the podium, become silent and still, enhance your body's posture, and intently stare at your students. This routine will immediately focus their attention on the task at hand, improve their playing posture, and prepare them for making music together.

Once positioned on the podium, formulate a quick and non-disruptive way to take attendance and check that your students have whatever materials they need each day. Nonverbal cues work well for this routine. For example, when checking for a pencil, simply raise a pencil to your own face. Encourage your students to do the same and scan each row, checking for students' preparedness. No talking on your part or the students' is necessary during an attendance or material check. When implemented daily, this silent routine can save precious rehearsal time.

Expectations must be clearly set for how you desire your students to learn within your classroom. If you set an expectation, then be prepared to provide a consequence if a student fails to comply. Consider this brief sequence of disciplinary actions:

1. a warning will be given to the student from the teacher
2. a consequence will be given to the student from the teacher
3. a conference between the parent/guardian and teacher will occur
4. disciplinary action will be taken by administration
5. removal from the course/music program will occur

Extreme circumstances may result in immediate movement to steps 4 or 5 at the discretion of the teacher and/or administration.

While using a purposeful and passionate plan for managing my classroom, rarely



“Make eye contact with each of your students and smile as they enter the classroom.”

offer an individual behavioral warning or musical critique as they exit the classroom. Remember that your music course is most likely an elective. If you are unable to make each individual child feel unique when he/she is in your presence, then that child may choose not to remain in your program. Ignite excitement with your students.

Reflect on your classroom management techniques. Are you teaching behaviors before content? Are you showing your students what you expect to hear or see from them at each phase of the class period? Demonstrate it. Enforce it. Then listen, watch, and savor as students from various locations, ethnic and financial backgrounds, and many different levels of talent build a successful musical family together. **T**

have I progressed beyond step 3. It is my strong belief that it is my responsibility and no one else’s to manage my classroom. An administrator will support your teaching methods much more if you can make use of them with little need for reinforcement from others.

Don’t forget the most important routine: connecting with students as human beings. Gain their admiration, respect, and trust before making music with them. Never miss

an opportunity to greet and dismiss them at your classroom door. Make eye contact with each of them and smile as they enter the classroom. Be jovial. Compliment them on their appearance or a nonmusical accomplishment. Discuss an interest with them, such as fashion, news, or sports. Your attention, smile, or kind word could be the only compassion they experience each day.

Upon dismissal, offer students a high-five, fist bump, or musical praise. If necessary,

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