

ENGAGEMENT: CREATING STUDENT-CENTERED ENSEMBLES by Anthony Susi - CMEA PD, Nov. 4, 2025

REFLECTIVE QUESTION:

Why do so many Band and Orchestra students that don't attend music college stop playing their instrument after high school?

TODAY'S GOAL:

Provide Strategies and Materials to **Ignite Engagement** in the Band/Orch. Rehearsals through **Mindful Listening** using **Assessment Tools** and **Recording Rubrics** that help build Musicianship Skills.

INDEPENDENCE CHALLENGES:

Every Other chair plays while the other half listens/evaluates.

Conduct **Without** giving any **Cues**. Listen for Aural Cues!

Start the Ensemble, Stop Conducting & Get Off the Podium while they play.

Mixed Seating (sit in a different row and have different instr. on each side).

Simon Says and Audiation Games ("Where's the Beat", "Hear That Tune")

DIAGNOSE PROBLEM & PRESCRIBE SOLUTION:

Students should Not Rely on Directors to do all of this for the Ensemble.

They Can't **Develop Aural Skills** and their Attention will Lack Focus.

The Ensemble will Improve quicker If students are **Expected** to **Take Ownership** thru **Focused Reflection** involving **Critical Listening Skills**.

1. They must **Define** what the **Key Music Elements** are to measure Accuracy & **Know the Vocab.**: Rhythmic, Intonation, Tempo, Articulation, Dynamics, Key Signature, Meter, Phrasing, Balance, Tone, Blend.

2. They need to **Recognize Correct vs. Incorrect examples** through **Listening & Modeling** Samples (Listening Skills Test/Compare & Contrast).

3. They need **Guided Practice and Prompting to Identify** when any of these Key Musical Elements are Lacking (Questioning Technique).

4. They need to **Learn Strategic Approaches to Improve** each Element.

Rhythm - Counting or Rhythm Syllable, practicing entire passage on 1 pitch.

Intonation - Eliminate Waver/Beats; Longer/Lower, Shorter/Sharper; Pitch Tendencies

Tempo - Using Metronome; Record Yourself; Practice with Demo recording

Articulation - Designate Syllables; Say it, then Play it (passage on 1 pitch)

Dynamics - Number Association; LED meter on Recording Device

Key Signature - Practice scales/arpeggios; "Pencil Accidental"; Highlight Changes

Meter - Movement!; Clapping with Accents

Phrasing - "Speak" in Complete Thoughts: begin-highpoint-end; Implied Shape.

Balance - Sound Pyramid; Melody vs Accomp; Register & Size of Sect. Factors.

Tone - Quality of Sound Analogies: Full, Warm, Rich vs Thin, Harsh, Airy

Blend - "Oneness", Color Analogies: mixing primary colors

5. Make students Partners in the Evaluation Process.

Ensemble Rehearsal Audio Assessment Form

Ensemble Rehearsal Video Assessment Form

Ensemble Concert Assessment Form

6. Transfer Knowledge.

Target Knowledge Form -History, Culture, Form, Rhythmic Patterns, Symbols, Terms, Key(s), Meter(s), Classification

7. Harness Peer Power for Program Growth.

Students Directed Sectionals

Chamber Ensembles

Band-Aides

Modeling in Rehearsals and for Recruitment

Elect Band Council Leaders (Advisory & Delegate Responsibilities)

For Additional FREE Downloadable Resources for Music Directors,
please visit: www.SusiMusic.net