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Beginning Band Pedagogy: Starting Students on the Path to Success

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Eastern Kentucky University

Beginning Band Pedagogy: Starting Students on the Path to Success

Honors Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

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By

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Faculty Mentor

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Beginning Band Pedagogy: Starting Students on the Path to Success

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Dr. Karin Sehmman, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

This research-based thesis outlines data on beginning band in order to discover an optimal method to starting band students to guarantee success in the field of music. The basis of this research is a review of current research literature, educator interviews, and a survey sent to beginning band directors. Interview responses were analyzed for consistencies among answers, and this was then applied to preexisting information from literature on the subject. Survey results were collected and analyzed, looking for trends in education and how these responses then corroborated with current literature and interview data. Beginning band pedagogy is discussed, and this thesis provides resources for educators to then apply to their classroom.

Keywords: beginning band, pedagogy, band director, education, instrumental education

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Figure 1 – Interview Questions

Interview Questions	
1.	At what age/grade level is it optimal to start a _____ player? Are there any aptitudes or physical features you look for in a beginner?
2.	What types of instruments, including brand names, are best for beginners?
3.	Describe the method book and first few lessons if you were starting a beginning _____ player.
4.	If the student was starting within a band class of varying instrumentation, is there a full method book that works well for _____ players? a. If not, why?
5.	What are common weaknesses you have observed in beginning or young _____ students in the following areas: a. Technique, including embouchure? b. Rhythm? c. Intonation or pitch accuracy? d. Musicianship? e. Instrument quality/disrepair?
6.	What can a band director do to avoid these common weaknesses in their young _____ players while still paying attention to the other members of the band?

Figure 2 – Survey Questions

Survey Questions	
1.	How long have you been teaching? a. 1 – 2 years b. 3 – 5 years c. 6 – 10 years d. 11 – 19 years e. 20+ years
2.	What grades do you teach? (check all that apply) a. 5 th grade b. 6 th grade c. 7 th grade d. 8 th grade e. Other (please specify)

3. How often do you see your classes?
- Every day
 - Three times a week
 - Twice a week
 - Once a week
4. How long are your class meetings?
- 15 minutes or less
 - 15 – 30 minutes
 - 30 – 45 minutes
 - 45 – 60 minutes
 - 60+ minutes
5. Do you start beginners on instruments?
- Yes
 - No
6. If so, which instruments do you allow students to start on? (check all that apply)
- Flute
 - Oboe
 - Clarinet
 - Bass Clarinet
 - Saxophone
 - Bassoon
 - Trumpet
 - French Horn
 - Trombone
 - Baritone/Euphonium
 - Trombone
 - Baritone/Euphonium
 - Tuba
 - Percussion
7. Which books do you use? If you use a specific book, which grade level(s) do you use it with?

	5 th grade	6 th grade	7 th grade	8 th grade
Standard of Excellence				
Accent on Achievement				
Essential Elements 2000				
Measures of Success				

Other (please specify)				
<p>8. What is your primary instrument?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Fluteb. Oboec. Clarinetd. Saxophonee. Bassoonf. Trumpetg. French Hornh. Trombonei. Baritone/Euphoniumj. Tubak. Percussionl. Voicem. String				

List of Tables

Table 1 – Results to Survey Question 1

1. How long have you been teaching?			
Years Teaching	N	Respondents	Percentage
1 – 2 years	20	0	0%
3 – 5 years	20	5	25%
6 – 10 years	20	6	30%
11 – 19 years	20	9	45%
20+ years	20	0	0%

Table 2 – Results to Survey Question

4. How long are your class meetings?			
Class length	N	Respondents	Percentage
15 minutes or less	20	0	0%
15 – 30 minutes	20	0	0%
30 – 45 minutes	20	5	25%
45 – 60 minutes	20	14	70%
60 minutes	20	1	5%

Table 3 – Results to Survey Question 6

6. Which instruments do you allow students to start on? (check all that apply)			
Instrument	N	Respondents	Percentage
Flute	20	20	100%
Oboe	20	9	45%
Clarinet	20	20	100%
Bass Clarinet	20	8	40%
Saxophone	20	20	100%
Bassoon	20	8	40%
Trumpet	20	20	100%
French Horn	20	12	60%
Trombone	20	19	95%
Baritone/Euphonium	20	17	85%
Tuba	20	13	65%

Percussion	20	18	90%
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Table 4 – Results to Survey Question 7

7. Which books do you use? If you use a specific book, which grade level(s) do you use it with?				
Method Book	5 th Grade	6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade
<i>Standard of Excellence</i>	8 respondents 40%	1 respondent 5%	5 respondents 25%	3 respondents 15%
<i>Accent on Achievement</i>	2 respondents 10%	5 respondents 25%	4 respondents 20%	0 respondents 0%
<i>Essential Elements 2000</i>	2 respondents 10%	8 respondents 40%	7 respondents 35%	4 respondents 20%
<i>Measures of Success</i>	0 respondents 0%	3 respondents 15%	1 respondent 5%	0 respondents 0%
(Other) <i>Strictly Technique</i>	0 respondents 0%	0 respondents 0%	0 respondents 0%	7 respondents 35%
(Other) <i>Technique and Musicianship</i>	0 respondents 0%	0 respondents 0%	0 respondents 0%	3 respondents 15%
(Other) <i>Tradition of Excellence</i>	0 respondents 0%	3 respondents 15%	2 respondents 10%	1 respondent 5%

Table 5 – Results to Survey Question 8

8. What is your primary instrument?			
Instrument	N	Respondents	Percentage
Flute	20	1	5%
Oboe	20	0	0%
Clarinet	20	3	15%
Saxophone	20	3	15%
Bassoon	20	0	0%
Trumpet	20	3	15%
French Horn	20	5	25%
Trombone	20	1	5%
Baritone/Euphonium	20	2	10%

Tuba	20	0	0%
Percussion	20	2	10%
Voice	20	0	0%
String	20	2	10%

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Introduction

One of the most important jobs in the field of music is that of the beginning band director. With each class of sixth graders that comes into the classroom ready to pick up an instrument, a band director is possibly beginning the career of the next Louis Armstrong or Leonard Bernstein. However, with the importance of the job, there is also the immense pressure of doing it correctly. If not taught correctly, the next Louis Armstrong never learns how to play the trumpet with the right embouchure, and has a musical career of readjustment and frustration as he tries to fix something that could have been easily avoided years earlier as a beginner.

Because of the importance of starting students correctly and growing the passion of music in them as young musicians, it is also important that methods of doing so are outlined and that research in the field is done so that educators are constantly striving to be the best band directors they can for their students. In that same vein of thought, this project is outlines research in the field of beginning band to find a method that sets students up for the most optimal success as musicians.

Keywords/Terminology

For the purposes of this document, the following terms will be used with the subsequent definitions in mind. If any of the terms are used in a context other than listed here, it will be clearly noted. A “band director” is the teacher of a band classroom. The director not only conducts the band, but also provides instruction on how to play instruments, read music, and manages the classroom. A “beginning band” is a band in which all the members are in their first year of instruction on an instrument. In the state of Kentucky, this is generally in fifth or sixth grade. Likewise, a “beginning band director” is a band director who teaches a beginning band. The textbook for a band class is a “method book”, which guides students through their first note on the instrument and through further notes and music in a sequential and pedagogically appropriate manner.

Methodology

Research for this project was approached in a three-tiered process. The first tier was literature-based research, and involved research within books on the subject of instrumental pedagogy and beginning band, as well as theses and dissertations on similar subjects. This research spanned works published from 1936 to 2014. The second tier was personal interviews with applied instrumental faculty at Eastern Kentucky University to provide a more specialized understanding of the pedagogy of each band instrument. These interviews were conducted in the Fall 2015 semester and were done on a volunteer basis. The third and final tier of research was a survey sent out to middle school band directors in Madison and Fayette County public schools in Kentucky. This survey was conducted using [surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), was distributed by email, and was completely anonymous. The survey was designed to get a picture of what beginning band

classrooms in the region are doing and how they are run. From these three sources of information, a conclusion was drawn about beginning band pedagogy as it applies to modern educational practices.

Review of Selected Literature

There is a large wealth of information available on the subject of music education. To establish a base understanding of the research that exists on the subject of beginning band, a large number of books, dissertations, and theses on the subject were reviewed. A select handful of these works heavily influenced this project, and are thus being discussed. This includes, but is not limited to, *The Teaching of Instrumental Music* (2nd edition)(1992), *A Sound Approach to Teaching Instrumentalists* (2nd edition)(1997), and *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band Director* (Rush, 2014).

Many of these books only focus on a single aspect of music education. *The Teaching of Instrumental Music* (2nd edition)(1992) focuses almost exclusively on the instruments as individuals, and not how to combine them together in a band setting and maintain continuous instruction. Each chapter is a different instrument, and focuses on the different pedagogical needs of that instrument (Colwell, 1992). However, Colwell and Goolsby do not go on to discuss how those instruments can be taught together in a classroom of mixed instrumentation. It is a great resource for questions about any one individual instrument, but for inquiries of multiple instruments working in tandem and the corresponding pedagogy, there are other places one should look.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is *A Sound Approach to Teaching Instrumentalists: An Application of Content and Learning Sequences* (2nd edition) by Stanley L. Schleuter (1997). Schleuter's work concentrates heavily on the instruction of

comprehensive musicianship to instrumental students, working on a key assumption that the actual instrumental instruction is taking place correctly, and then the supplemental work outlined in *A Sound Approach* is just adding on and reinforcing new concepts, such as tonality and modality of a piece of music (Schleuter, 1997, p. 41). This book has a chapter titled “Teaching Performance Skills Through Pattern Vocabularies and Music” (p. 119), and this is as close as Schleuter gets to actually discussing an instrument and its corroborating pedagogy. The chapter does not discuss how to teach the instruments, but how to teach musical concepts through performance on instruments. As explained by Schleuter, anyone can make sound on an instrument, but the ultimate goal is to make meaningful music – “It is pointless to play an instrument if the results are not musical.” (Schleuter, 1997, p. 41). Schleuter’s goal with this chapter and book was not to instruct the reader on how to teach students to play the instruments, like Colwell and Goolsby’s *The Teaching of Instrumental Music* (2nd edition)(1992), but to expand instrumental education so that students can understand music as greater than organized sound.

While Colwell and Goolsby’s *The Teaching of Instrumental Music* (1992) is highly respected as a source of instrumental information, it should also be noted that Goolsby was involved in other research projects, including one on the time and efficiency of band directors. In this study, various directors were timed while rehearsing bands, and it was concluded that expert teachers spend more time in rehearsal playing the instruments, rather than giving verbal instruction (Worthy, 2009, p. 30).

On yet another end of the spectrum from *The Teaching of Instrumental Music* (2nd edition)(1992) and *A Sound Approach to Teaching Instrumentalists: An Application of Content and Learning Sequences* (2nd edition)(1997), lies the book *Habits of a Successful*

Middle School Band Director (2014) by Scott Rush, Jeff Scott, and Emily Wilkinson. *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band Director* covers a wide range of topics, ranging from recruitment strategies for beginning band, to specific instrument pedagogy, to appropriate assessments for band classes. This book is very close in content material to the goal of this research project, as it takes into consideration several different aspects of beginning band pedagogy. Chapters one and two discuss the organizational skills that are required of beginning band directors in order to promote the greatest success in their beginning band programs (Rush, 2014, p. 1). Chapters three, four, and five, each outline one of the three years of middle school band and the unique pedagogical issues associated with the first three years of instrumental education (Rush, 2014, p. 51). Chapters six and seven are centered on actual instrumental pedagogy and include a number of exercises that can be used with a band, as well as instrument specific concepts (Rush, 2014, p. 75). Chapter eight is a standalone chapter titled “Effective Assessment” and discusses the various ways a band director can create assessments that are specific, measurable, and tangible (Rush, 2014, p. 114). Chapter nine, “Making Music” aligns greatly with Schleuter’s *A Sound Approach to Teaching Instrumentalists*, as it impresses upon the need to do more than make sound, but to give the music meaning (Rush, 2014, p. 129). The remaining six chapters of the book discuss various organizational aspects and high quality literature that can be used to instruct a middle school band for a high level of success. The overall goal of the book is to impress upon the need for a well-rounded director who not only knows the content backwards and forwards, but also applies it in a meaningful way that fosters a love and passion for music in students. While the goal of this research project is to look at individual instrument pedagogy and how it can be

applied to a full band setting, *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band Director* very much outlines many of the same goals that this project wishes to achieve.

To work alongside with Rush's *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band Director*, he wrote a method book for students in their second year and above titled *Habits of a Successful Middle School Musician: A Comprehensive Method Book for Years Two, Three, and Beyond*. In this method book, unlike other second year method books, which are designed in a chronological progression (Pearson, 2011, p. 2), the exercises are organized into different categories and within each category they are in placed in a chronological order (Rush, 2015, p. iii). While the exercises are all of great variety and expand the band beyond standard keys, the book has no color or design inside, and might be off-putting to students, as there is nothing aesthetic pleasing about it, whereas a standard second year method book like *Tradition of Excellence: Comprehensive Band Method* is very colorful inside, designed to be more inviting to a young student (Pearson, 2011, p. 25).

Interviews

Method.

In order to get an expert opinion from instrument specific educators on each of the band instruments, each member of the Eastern Kentucky University applied instrumental faculty was interviewed in a one on one setting. Each interview used the same set of questions, which are listed below in Table 1. These interviews were intended to gain critical insight into each instrument's unique pedagogy, and then apply that to band as a whole.

Results

Amongst the interviews, there was a large amount of consistencies between the professors. First thing to be mentioned by all of the interviewees was that it is necessary for beginning students on any instrument to be physically large enough to play and hold the instrument properly without causing physical damage to the student or the instrument. In general, the average starting age of fifth or sixth grade in the state of Kentucky ensures that most students will be large enough to hold and play the instruments correctly, but a band director should still check that every student has an appropriate instrument for their body size, as certain instruments require more specific physical characteristics than others. For the bassoon and clarinet, a student must have large enough hands to completely cover all tone holes without pressing side keys down as well (C. Carucci, personal communication, October 1, 2015)(C. Rhoades, personal communication, September 4, 2015), and on flute and trombone, the student must have long enough arms to reach out and hold the instrument properly (N. Siler, personal communication, October 2, 2015)(K. Kean, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Saxophones also have the issue of hitting side keys on accident, but without the added issue of covering tone holes, so it is important that beginning saxophone players have hands large enough to hold the instrument properly (L. Nelson, personal communication, September 11, 2015). It is also important that students playing wind instruments need to have their permanent teeth grown in, so as to play the instrument with stability.

For all instruments except for French horn and oboe, it was said that beginning method books commonly used in beginning band classes are acceptable for beginning students. In the case of the oboe, the standard starting note of these books is either

concert F or concert Bb, which are very difficult fingerings for beginning students to do, and are unstable pitches (J. Collins, personal communication, November 11, 2015).

These books can also be confusing for beginning students, as the oboe books often have extra pages for “oboes only” that contain the same exercises as the full band pages, but start on more friendly fingerings (Sheldon, 2010, p. 1). For the French horns, the instrument is pitched a perfect fifth apart from the other brass instruments. Because of this difference in pitch, the standard starting notes of concert F or Bb place the beginning students just too high or low to be comfortable as a beginner and can encourage bad habits in playing in order to compensate and reach those notes (M. Sehmann, personal communication, August 31, 2015). French horn method books also tend to have “horns only” pages at the beginning of the book in a more friendly range for beginning students, but this can be confusing as these pages contain the same exercises as the full band pages, just on different notes (O’Reilly, 1997, p. 5).

When the question of weaknesses came around, the answers started to be more detailed and varied from each interviewee. Each instrument has its own unique pitfalls that occur in students if band directors are not mindful of certain things, and can be harmful for the student’s success later as a musician.

In the area of brass instruments, embouchure was a common issue. The embouchure for all are similar, but not exactly the same, and should not all be taught the same across the board. The French horn places the mouthpiece higher on the lips than the other brass instruments, and when students switch over to horn this should especially be stressed as different (M. Sehmann, personal communication, August 31, 2015). As well for all brass instruments, it is a common issue that students reach the upper register by pinching and

shoving the mouthpiece into their face, rather than with proper air support and technique (D. Clemmer, personal communication, September 9, 2015). For the low brass instruments, it is highly recommended that students remain challenged and that the section is not used as a dumping ground for less musically adept students. Band directors should look for students show an aptitude for low brass instruments, rather than using it to hide students whose missed notes would be more obvious on a melody instrument (J. Willett, personal communication, September 10, 2015).

For woodwind instruments, the issues are more varied, as the instruments themselves are more varied amongst the family. All of the woodwind instruments except for the flute face the common struggle of reeds, which is a common problem found in beginning students. For the clarinet and saxophone, issues lie in students not having reeds that are the correct strength for their playing, or that students simply are not aware of the differences among their reeds or proper care for the reeds (L. Nelson, personal communication, September 11, 2015). For the double reed instruments – oboe and bassoon – problems for students lie in that they simply do not have access to decent reeds. Store bought reeds for the oboe and bassoon are of low quality and can quickly hinder a student, as they are often too soft and close in on their selves while playing (C. Carucci, personal communication, October 1, 2015). It is recommended by both double reed faculty members that teachers quickly find a private teacher who can make reeds for students that are tailored to fit the needs of a young musician and allow them room to grow (J. Collins, personal communication, November 11, 2015).

For beginning percussion students, it is important to stress not just rhythmic fluency, but also ear training (J. Koontz, personal communication, September 2, 2015). The realm

of percussion instruments varies widely, and because of this students need to be versatile and trained in all aspects. To achieve this, an educator must rotate students throughout the section and allow them to gain experience on the full range of the percussion family. Ear training is critical for beginning percussion students so that they can work with timpani, which require tuning, and mallet percussion, which play melodic lines. It is a poor trend in music education for band directors to place students with poor pitch recognition on percussion instruments, and directors should avoid making the percussion section a dumping ground for students without aural awareness (J. Koontz, personal communication, September 2, 2015).

To avoid these pitfalls in education, all interviewees recommended a level of extremely high awareness in the directors at all times in the classroom (D. Clemmer, personal communication, October 1, 2015). Through constant monitoring and constantly checking that students do not slip into bad habits, the director can help prevent a simple fix from becoming a complex problem that snowballs and hinders a student's success on their instrument. Bad habits that might help a student achieve an immediate result on the instrument will quickly become a compounding problem that later holds back the student in other areas on their horn.

Survey

Method

A survey discussing beginning band instrumentation and resources was sent to every middle school band director in Madison and Fayette county public schools in Kentucky. The survey was sent out using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to the teachers' state issued email addresses and results were collected completely anonymous. It should be noted that

some of the middle schools in Fayette County have two band directors; in these cases both directors were sent the survey. This does not skew results, however, as there is no guarantee that in these cases that both directors responded to the survey, and in many of these schools, the two directors function in different capacities (only one may be responsible for doing fifth grade band or high school band). The entire survey and questions can be seen in Figure 2.

Results

This survey was sent to twenty-seven middle school band directors total, and of the twenty-seven recipients, twenty responded to the survey. All percentages given in are with the sample size of twenty respondents ($N = 20$).

The first question of the survey was designed to attain a demographic of survey taking band directors and establish a basis of how long on average they have been teaching as a career. Responses and percentages to question one can be seen in Figure 3.

Questions two through four were intended to establish a basis of what the average band classroom structure is for the population to whom the survey was sent. All but one of the respondents listed teaching the standard sixth through eighth grade middle school classes, others listed extended grades taught, including fifth grade (85%) and high school (10%). Almost all respondents (90%) meet with their classes daily. Discrepancies began to occur in responses to question four, referring to the length of class meetings. While majority of respondents (70%) listed that their classes meet for 45 – 60 minutes, a quarter of respondents only meet with their classes for 30 – 45 minutes. Exact data results can be seen in Figure 4.

Questions five and six dealt with the instruction of beginning band students. All twenty respondents answered that they start beginners on instruments, making it the only survey item to receive a completely unanimous response. Question six dealt with the instrumentation on which students can begin, which varies greatly from one classroom to another for various reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to, the availability of certain instruments in the classroom and the comfort of the band director with teaching specific instruments. Of the responses, only four instruments are unanimously started across all twenty classrooms: flute, clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet. The exact responses and results to question six can be seen in Figure 5.

These responses are completely logical based on current practices observed in the teaching of middle school band. The oboe and bassoon do not get started as frequently as other reeded instruments (the oboe in 45% and the bassoon in 40% of respondents), as both the instrument itself and the reeds are more expensive than other woodwind instruments, and they are notoriously finicky and hard for students to achieve on. Because they are harder to produce a pleasant sound on and control (Colwell, 1992, p. 182) – the oboe especially – students often become discouraged and drop band out of frustration. The bassoon offers an added challenge for beginners, as it requires that students have a hand large enough to reach and cover the tone holes without accidentally pressing extra keys along the side (C. Carucci, personal communication, October 1, 2015). Some beginning students in the fifth and sixth grade simply do not have hands large enough to play the bassoon, and have to wait a year or two until they can play the instrument.

The bass clarinet is also not started as frequently (40% of survey respondents), as clarinet players are expected to be able to double between the Bb and the bass clarinet as they become more advanced as musicians (C. Rhoades, personal communication, September 4, 2015). This is a skill which is usually introduced later in the student's education, once they have developed a basic skill set on the clarinet and as a musician in general; these skills include reading music, aural skills such as pitch recognition, and embouchure development. Bass clarinets and their appropriate reeds are also more expensive than a standard Bb clarinet, so students who play the bass clarinet generally use a school owned instrument. Because of this, some students may not have the chance to play one even if they wanted to, as not every school owns a bass clarinet.

The French horn is another instrument not started as frequently as other band instruments (started by 60% of survey respondents) due to it being a perfect fifth apart from the other band instruments. This makes it difficult to play the unison passages in a beginning band method book without placing the horn in a range that is too high or low for a beginner to start on comfortably. Accurate pitch is also harder to maintain on a French horn due to it being placed an octave higher on the overtone series, and many band directors chose to have their students play another instrument (generally trumpet) for six months or a year before allowing them to switch to horn (M. Sehmman, personal communication, August 31, 2015). This time on another brass instrument is intended to help students develop aural skills and embouchure control, which should make the transition to horn significantly easier, and allow students to avoid deal with range issues that are associated with beginning horn, however it is debated amongst educators whether

or not it is actually easier on students or not, as the switch may also be confusing (Colwell, 1992, p. 356).

The seventh question of the survey dealt with method books and what grades they are used in. The primary goal of this question was to establish which books are being used most often with beginning bands, but grades seven and eight were included as well to observe if directors continued to use method books after beginning band. For fifth grade band, the most commonly used book was *Standard of Excellence*, which is used by 40% of respondents with fifth grade bands. In sixth grade, however, *Standard of Excellence* was abandoned in favor of *Essential Elements 2000*, which is used by 40% of respondents with sixth grade bands. It is reassuring to see that the method books most used in beginning band classrooms are the same method books that receive the highest accolades in research documents analyzing the content of such books. In Elizabeth Birdwhistell's *A Content Analysis of Five Beginning Band Method Books*, it is noted that *Essential Elements* and *Standard of Excellence* have the greatest variety of material to encourage comprehensive musicianship in students, and goes as far as to say that *Standard of Excellence* is the most recommended by the author as a method book for beginning students (Birdwhistell, 1998, p. 64). *Essential Elements* has since added supplemental materials and redesigned the internal appearance of the book under the title of *Essential Elements 2000* (Rhodes, 1991)(Lautzenheiser, 1999). The exact responses and percentages are listed in Figure 6; for all responses to question seven of the survey and all results, N = 20.

For the option of "other" on the survey, the books *Strictly Technique*, *Technique and Musicianship*, and *Tradition of Excellence* were listed with their corresponding grade

levels, and are appropriately represented in Figure 4 with the denotation of “(other)” included before their title. *Standard of Excellence* can be seen as the most commonly used for a fifth grade beginning classroom, while in the sixth grade classroom *Essential Elements 2000* is used more often. One can also note that across all four grades, *Essential Elements 2000* is the most consistently used at all levels. For eighth grade classrooms, the most commonly used book was *Strictly Technique*, which was listed independently by respondents under the classification of “other”.

The final and eighth question of the survey was designed to get a demographic of middle school band directors and their primary instruments. As a music education major in college, instrumental methods classes are required for all instruments other than the primary instrument on which you take lessons and perform every semester, but these classes can only take a student so far because there simply is not enough time in a four year degree plan to master every band instrument. Because certain instruments lend themselves better to learning other instruments than some, it is harder for educators with certain primary instruments to learn how to play the other instruments. Percussionists, pianists, and string players find it difficult because there is no “wind” aspect to the playing of their home instruments, so the concept of air support and using the mouths in order to produce and control tone is foreign. It is even more odd to see a string player teaching band, as there are orchestra jobs available that they would be much more comfortable teaching instead. In the survey results, 80% of respondents played wind instruments, while 10% were percussionists and the final 10% were string players. The exact breakdown of respondent answers can be found in Figure 7.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Elizabeth Birdwhistell neatly summed up the results of this research in her masters thesis when she said, “No one single method book fulfills the needs of every situation.” (Birdwhistell, 1998, p. 1). This statement applies not only to method books, however, but teaching beginning band in general. Every band director is unique in his or her talents and weaknesses as a teacher, and because of this different teaching strategies and approaches to pedagogy will work better depending on the band director and his or her students. Regardless of the method of teaching, there are a select number of undeniable tasks that must be done in a beginning band classroom in order to guarantee the success of students as musicians:

First and foremost, the director must know each instrument as well as they know their primary instrument, and be able to recognize any potential problems with a student or instrument before they can even occur. If a student is placed on an instrument on which they are physically not fit to play, it is the director’s responsibility to recognize this and guide the student to an instrument on which they will be successful (A. Putnam, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Just as well, the director should be able to demonstrate on each and every instrument for students and produce a tone that is characteristic of the instrument, so that students can have in their mind an aural image of a characteristic tone that they should work and strive for. As students continue to grow as musicians and improve, professional recordings of musicians should be provided to students to help construct an even clearer goal in tone for students.

The director must constantly have the long-term goal of success for the musicians as priority, rather than immediate and quick fixes (A. Putnam, personal communication,

September 14, 2015). By teaching things properly from the start, even if it is more time consuming and doesn't always offer an immediately perfect sound from the student, it saves the student from future frustration from having to relearn playing their instrument later on in their musical careers. It might be easier at first to tell a trumpet or trombone player to "pinch" in order to reach higher notes, and for a short period this will provide students with an increased upper range, however this quickly becomes a crutch, creates a thin and unpleasant tone in the upper register, and very much limits the upper range which a student will be able to reach (N. Siler, personal communication, October 2, 2015).

The band director must be constantly aware of everything happening in the classroom, always watching students to check that they are using proper embouchures, holding their instruments correctly, and using the right fingerings or slide positions. To allow for greater awareness in the director, music that is being played by a class should be known well enough that the director is not bound to the score. Score study should be done to know the music inside and out, so that the director can focus more on the students, rather than the sheet music in front of them (Schleuter, 1997, p. 126).

With high awareness in the classroom at all times, a thorough understanding of each instrument and its individual pedagogy as well as music used in class, student success in beginning band as a contributing factor to their later success as a musician is attainable. There's no one prescribed method of teaching or book that will provide every band director with success, but there is a combination of pedagogy and literature that works for every band and their director. Ultimately, the director must remember that every professional was once a beginner, and that they could have the next Pablo Casals in their

band room, and should always approach instruction as if every student could be the next big name in music. If it were known for sure that a student were to be world famous, greater attention to detail would be taken at all times, but even without that guarantee of prodigal success, the same level of care and attention must be given to all students. The moment the attention drops and students are allowed to get away with bad habits and incorrect technique, the next Joe Alessi learns his slide positions wrong, and could get so frustrated later on when it has compounded into a major issue that he quits band.

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