All teachers find moments that present significant challenges in our daily lives. The positive ways in which we respond to those challenges, whether through research, building stronger relationships with others, or simply maintaining a firm grasp of a teaching philosophy, will ultimately reduce attrition rates of music students and music teachers.—Aaron Kennel, Nimitz HS, Aldine ISD

A formula for memorization, or permanent musical learning: 1. Repetition, 2. Lack of internal or external interference, 3. Meaning. When students have difficulty learning or remembering, I suggest reviewing this simple formula to see if one of the factors is missing or has been minimized.—Andrew Dabcynski, Brigham Young Univ

A simple five-finger pattern can be used to teach many concepts in piano as well as in theory keyboard skills. Concepts taught are the geography of the keyboard, finger numbers, correct hand position and technical/coordination skills, major triad, dominant seventh chords, circle of fifths, tonic, and dominant, transposition, and harmonizing a melody.—Celinda Hallbauer, Central Texas College

All advocacy is local. You cannot take a generic online pamphlet and advocate effectively for what happens in your music classroom. Teachers must constantly reflect on how well their program is serving students of all ability levels.—Steven Demorest, Northwestern Univ

Center-based learning is an excellent way to empower a substitute, and it can be utilized in your classroom for transitions, critical listening, and assessments. Use centers to help differentiate and provide concept interventions to help support students who may be falling behind.—Erin Pitts, Roanoke ES, Northwest ISD

Chamber music provides an exciting and fun opportunity for young students to collaborate with fellow musicians, develop concepts of rehearsal etiquette and preparation, become exposed to a variety of stylistic genres, and, ultimately, foster individual intrinsic motivation.—James Barger, West Texas A&M Univ

Competitive show choir can fill an interesting niche in Texas choral music programs. Competing in a placement-based environment, not just for ratings, has big benefits for our programs, not the least of which is bringing in demographics of students that can otherwise be hard to reach and recruit.—Jennifer Randall, Eaton HS, Northwest ISD

Conducting is a challenging avocation. We must be continually vigilant and aware of our important role in choosing music that enriches the human spirit of our performers.—Matthew Mailman, Oklahoma City Univ

Consider which strategies, behaviors, and outcomes support goal attainment. Determine how framing, priming, and feedback can be used to support managing the engagement of motives that facilitate goal pursuit.—Abel Rodriguez, North Mesquite HS
I will not ask you to perform any task for which I have not provided the necessary tools or instruction; in return, I ask that you respond with your best effort. Through this covenant we can move quickly and efficiently toward mastery.—Darcy Williams, Stiles MS, Leander ISD

Do you always stop to spotlight something wrong or poorly done? Why not stop to praise a beautiful sound, a section that matched pitch or shaped a line well. Students want your praise and alter their playing to get it. The good will spread in the ensemble—spend time in the excellent world!—Rick Yancey, Retired, Sugar Land

For double-reed instruments, response + pitch = good tone. When response and pitch are taken care of first, tone follows very easily. Using high-quality handmade reeds, along with an oo embouchure for both oboe and bassoon helps facilitate strong fundamentals of response, pitch, and tone.—Celeste Johnson, Oklahoma State Univ

Know what you want an app to do before you begin searching. Define the job first, then look for the best tool. When integrating technology with traditional methods, don’t waste class time teaching tech skills. Choose tech that fits student skill levels so they are free to concentrate on the music and task.—Denise Lewis, White Pigeon Community Schools, Minnesota

Legato tonguing for trombonists requires constant air, a light tongue (loh), and a fast slide. Practice these independently before attempting to slur. These components can be addressed by glissando playing, lightly tonguing rhythm on a single pitch, and playing the fronts of the notes with a rhythmic slide respectively.—Jeff Dunn, Private Instructor, Houston

Look at your curriculum and lessons through the eyes of a kindergartner. Create a fantasy world for them to be drawn into. Smile and demonstrate your love of music to them. Choose high-quality folk music as your curriculum base, use stories to transition between activities, and away you go!—Lauren Bain, Schurz ES, New Braunfels ISD

Many music education majors successfully begin their studies at community colleges. The Field of Study, approved by the THECB, helps students create clear transfer paths between institutions. Community colleges serve many student populations that need additional academic, musical, or financial assistance.—Martha Braswell, San Jacinto College Central

One of the many ironies I’ve discovered as a conductor is that the more meticulous our rehearsal planning and score study, the greater chance for spontaneity in our rehearsals—and these are the moments that our students most often cherish.—Gary Seighman, Trinity Univ

Online connections among performers, audiences, composers, clinicians, and conductors allow students a window to the world of cultures and the opportunity to hone their skills without ever leaving the classroom.—James Ekrut, Fort Worth ISD

Our goal as teachers is not only to lead students to perform successfully but also, and more importantly, to teach them to be successful learners.—Daniel Gee, Chisholm Trail MS, Round Rock ISD

Our manual conducting gestures are used in combination with other means of communication, and a great deal of a conductor’s communicative capacity is based in facial expression, eye contact, body language, and general posture. A greater awareness of these nonverbal aspects will enhance the effectiveness of our conducting on all levels.—Carolyn Watson, Texas State Univ

Our singers deserve to learn the language of music. Let’s dig a bit into our programmed choral repertoire, analyze and teach from it, and give them musical skills for today and the rest of their lives.—David Xiques, San Francisco State Univ

Patience, empathy, and a willing heart to work together for the good of each student promotes understanding. Diversity is something that can be seen in any classroom, and by differentiating instruction to meet the students’ needs, there can be success in a general education classroom.—Erika Warren, Special Education and Music Teacher, Dallas

Playing a game in the beginner-band classroom does not have to be an alternative to learning. If we supplement our instruction with a variety of activities, we are more likely to effectively reach more students. When more students are successfully engaged, the quality and quantity of students will increase in our programs.—Timothy Pallone, Lumberton HS
Proper setup is a prerequisite for effective string playing, enabling students to progress toward their potential and helping them stay healthy and pain-free. A strong, balanced posture also leads to greater ease and relaxation, which in turn leads to bigger sound and greater facility.—Ames Asbell, Texas State Univ

Students want learning to be easy, fast, and effortless, but that style of learning doesn’t always lead to long-term retention of music skills and knowledge (no pain, no gain). Slow down learning or even make the task tougher. Strive to strike a balance between asking students to struggle and scaffolding their learning.—Diane Persellin, Trinity Univ

Survey students to determine their performance strengths and weaknesses and to get to know their musical goals. Listen to their interests and include them in your lessons. Encourage them to practice techniques that not only advance their skill set but inspire them to want to perform great music—again and again.—Neil Dusseault, Private Instructor, Boerne

You don’t have to be disconnected by the physical isolation of your teaching assignment. Social media is a powerful form of connection that can support, encourage and inspire you!—Kathy Kuddes, Plano ISD

The ultimate goal of education is to lead students to think for themselves. It is the value added that truly matters. Without artistic, musical value added, all you have is a product.—Richard Floyd, UIL State Director of Music Emeritus

There are no real secrets to sightreading with middle school students. We need a personal plan and student buy-in. Good sightreading skills are holistically dependent upon good fundamentals and a daily commitment to excellence. For middle school students, it is acceptable to allow them to create, engage, and enjoy the process!—Scott Deppe, Lamar Univ

They say you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink. Solution: Feed him salt. Correctly placed external motivators can create intrinsically motivated students.—Jennifer Gallagher, Ryan JH, Alvin ISD

To develop leadership skills in your music class, remember to teach your students to value the individual, make good choices, speak clearly, develop a positive climate, provide a safe environment, establish procedures and routines, master performance excellence, accept peer support, conduct musically, and give feedback.—Mary Neeley Stevens, Carter Academy, Aldine ISD

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Before You Submit
Your proposal should offer a complete summary of what you will present, and the title should be an obvious indicator of the content. Submit a short biographical statement on each clinician. Be prepared to offer a very short summary as well descriptive details about what you will present and how.

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Travel so you meet the people and truly experience their culture. There is so much wonderful music in the world, and the ways to teach it are not always parallel to our own. Take every opportunity to experience a culture firsthand because regardless of governmental differences, as musicians and as music educators we are more alike than we are different.—Janice Killian, Texas Tech Univ

Very young musicians need the opportunity to explore and play with many kinds of sounds. Repeated opportunities to experiment with sounds builds a repertoire of sounds they know how to manipulate. The goal is to move them from “What does this do?” to “What can I do with this?” Adults can introduce new sounds and help expand opportunities to play with and organize sounds.—Janice Smith, Queens College City Univ

We all know how to teach sol–mi, but for some reason teaching beyond the pentatonic is a mystery. Remember the process: Sing songs and games with melodic turns; make body signs from the songs; determine if the new note is closer to sol or mi (because this is the first time we have taught half-steps); make body signs to unknown material; give it a name. Then practice.—Lamar Robertson, Kodály Clinician

We are already successfully implementing the TEKS through unique and innovative teaching and learning strategies, but as public school educators, we must learn to translate our success!—Christopher Hanson, San Marcos HS

When approaching structuring and assessing creative activities, it is important to provide enough structure to give a guidepost for students, while leaving enough room for students to think divergently.—Marjorie LoPresti, Richard Dammers, East Brunswick HS, New Jersey; Rowan Univ

When looking for children’s books to use in your classroom, search for books that have artistic, intellectual, cultural, or historical value. Is the book well written? Does it have depth? Is there an element of surprise? Will the children be able to relate to the book’s subject matter or characters? What role can this book play in the musical training of your students? Is this book one you want the children to remember for the rest of their lives?—Darla Meek, Texas A&M Univ/Commerce

With ever-tightening budgets and busier schedules, bringing guests into your rehearsals can be a challenge. However, improvements in technology are allowing for options using videoconferencing software. While still not perfect, with a little bit of planning and equipment (particularly an external condenser microphone) you can get meaningful feedback for you and your students, or simply expose them to the wider music world through contacting performers or composers.—John Denis, Univ of North Texas

Your choice of repertoire and musical literature lays the foundation for success in instruction, concerts, and contests. The repertoire you select should be of high quality, it should encourage growth in musical and technical knowledge and skills, and, most importantly, it should move the emotions of both performers and listeners.—Charlotte Mizener, Lamar Univ

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