



Unlocking the Mystery of Middle School Students

Habits Institute
Charleston, South Carolina

Middle Schoolers 101

What is your favorite thing about middle schoolers?

What makes them tick? What do they like? What do they dislike?

Things to remember:

- Maybe be less coordinated than they are used to due to lots of quick and not always symmetrical growth
- Physical development may be ahead or behind cognitive development
- Social creatures
- Emotional/all the feels: Use that to your advantage
- What is their why? Parent is making them; bestie is doing it; they liked the recruiting presentation/teacher; interested in instrument/music
- Create opportunities for shared experiences
- They like extrinsic motivation (stickers, candy, etc)
- Quick pacing, small bites; variety of energy levels (Theirs and yours)
- Battles? Choose carefully-save your energy for teaching
- Praise publicly/discipline privately

Recruiting/Retention

- Have traditions (class, school, community) Parade (See pic); Birthday brigade; Pieces that have traditions attached (See video)
- Kids are your best recruiters
- Instrument petting zoos (Wild about orchestra-set the scene)
- Retention is recruiting the kids you already have (daily). It is essential to build relationships based on more than just music.
- class community, and social events (S'morechestra, practice picnic, cereal parties, "donut" forget to practice, hot chocolate and karaoke, movie night)
- spiritwear that reflects the theme (Star Wars, Super Heroes, Orchestra is Out of this World, Coffee house with the best Bow-ristas around (one of our 7th grade cellists came up with this!), Mandalorian: Orchestra is the Way
- Their opinion/voice matters: seats (as a reward or rehearsal technique), pieces (within parameters), warm ups, bowings, social activities
- Understand cultures demographics of your school and students: do your students see themselves represented in your program and repertoire choices. This can (should) start at recruiting and with instrument selection.
- Violin Viola Cello Bass
- Trips-don't let them be the tail that wags the dog; chaperones-story time!
- Repertoire selection (Representation, learning, sounding good, variety)

Pictures/Videos

- B'whackerChristmas: 8th Grade (17:35)



Class Set up/Flow and Routine

Middle Schoolers are creatures of habits. Teach and re-teach routine including:

- Enter/exit policies, Restroom policies (Mirror in your room will change your life); bookbags/stuff/cases
- Rosin/shoulder rests other supplies (multiple stations)
- Different for our beginners until they are used to their instruments and class size
- Here is a sample of a 45 minute Orchestra class for me:
 - Room is already set up with chairs and stands; Binders on the stand with their numbers. Their numbers stay the same, but where those are changes weekly)
 - Music is playing as they enter (themed each week. Friday is always "Friday)
 - When the majority of the class is there and unpacked "I play you Play"
 - Tuning
 - Warm up/Technique
 - Repertoire (newer)
 - More warm up /technique
 - Repertoire (more familiar and try to finish with a big chunk)

Routines, but not Ruts!

- Routine is important, but don't let your students or you get stuck in a rut!
- Variety of Seating Options: Rotate seating; fruitbasket turnover, Sit in same section different row; Different side of the room; Same section different stand partner; In a different section; Circle; Concentric circles; 4 corners; Straight rows
- Use games and Tricks that Click; Themed Days/Units
- Snack-tivities: S'more arpeggios; edible ledger lines; kissable posture; wormis orchestratis just to name a few

Themed Days/Units

August: Arpeggios as s'mores (7th and 8th)

September: Rosin Eating Zombie Invasion (6th); Fiddle Music/Hayride (7th/8th); Dot Day 9/15

October: Sloth Day (10/20); Instrument Costume Day

November: is Bow-venber

December: Orchestra Coffee house (can do any time)

January: Wintervals

February Note reading boot camp

March Irish Fiddle Tunes

April: Music of the Titanic; Jazz/Improv

May P'LEI" a thon; Blast from the Past; Gloorchestra

Fun and Games: That's Edu-tainment

-Play or Dare

-Would you Rather

-Win something from Mrs. Ball's purse -Practice time with fun timer

-Tic-Tac Nooooooo

-Stradivarius Says

-Who Wore it Best

-The Unfair Game

-Disguised repetition

-Bearboozled/Red Hot Challenge Chili Pepper Orchestra

-Forbidden Rhythm

-Mrs. Ball vs. Y'all

-Play Along Tracks on Youtube! 7 Nation Army

-Big Money Review

-Pasta or Composer

-Instrument Naming Ceremony/Certificate

Contact Information

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Thank you for what you do everyday!