

Mulligan 6th Grade Band Parent Meeting

November 14, 2016 6:00PM

Agenda

1. Welcome!

- a. Thank you for coming this evening. I fully understand how packed all of your schedules are, and I appreciate that you are supporting your child by coming here this evening. Tonight, I'd like to take time to answer all of your questions – as a group – and share with you some strategies and tips that might help your child to achieve more success in the band program.
- b. I got the idea for this meeting from a colleague who teaches ENL classes. She explained to me that she wishes that she could help her daughter with her clarinet, but she just didn't know how. She said that she checks over her math and English homework each night and helps her study for tests, but she doesn't remember enough about the clarinet – and of music in general – to help her daughter with her music classes.
- c. Tonight, I'd like to talk about a few elements of your child's music curriculum and show you what a successful practice session might look like at home.

2. Lessons

- a. Each week, your child has a small group band lesson with students of similar ability. These lesson groups will be changing in a few weeks based upon seating auditions that will happen right after thanksgiving break.
- b. At each lesson, we begin by playing through our scales. Right now, all groups know 1 scale, and most groups are supposed to know 2 or 3 scales.
 - i. A Scale is performed by playing 8 notes up, and those same 8 notes right back down.
- c. After our scale warmup, I ask students to take out their 'Yellow Checklist' and their music and the students get assessed on their progress over the last week. Also, skill development, technique, new notes, etc.
- d. After the assessment, and how well the students understood the material from the previous lesson, we either move forward in the music, or review and improve on the prior week's material. Most weeks, we are able to move forward, but over the course of a day of lessons, there are always a few students who are not able to play any of the sections of music that we have learned.
- e. During the lessons, I teach the students ways to practice that research has shown to be successful. At a lesson, when I notice a child is having difficulty, I ask him or her 'Did you practice the way we discussed?' and the answer is often 'No.'
- f. I do offer extra help twice a day (lunch and after school). During these sessions, I reinforce the 'correct way to practice' in the hopes that the student will see how much success can be made over a short period of time.

3. Practicing at home

- a. I teach students to practice so that they can use a relatively simple three step process: Count it, Sing it, Play it. First, they count the section of music that they are trying to learn. Then, they sing the section of music – at the same speed that they counted it. Lastly, they try to play it at the same speed that they sing it.

- b. COUNT: The joke about musicians – is that we only know how to count to 4 – because, that’s all we do all day – Count to 4! Please see handout #1
Vocab: Whole Note, Half Note, Quarter Note, Eighth Note
 - c. SING: The next step is to sing the section of music at the same speed that you counted it. This might take a couple of tries to get it at the correct speed. You might even have to count it again to remind yourself of the rhythm!
 - i. Then, sing it while pressing the keys on your instrument. This helps the movements to become ‘automatic’ as the student really learns the section
 - d. PLAY: Then, we play the section of music several times until it starts sounding correct.
 - e. After we learn two measures, it’s time to learn two more!
 - f. After we learn the first two – and the next two – it’s time to GLUE them together!
 - g. CHECKLIST – Students should ‘grade themselves’ based on how well they think they did on the section of music. If they can Count it perfectly – Sing it perfectly – and Play it so it sounds just like the counting and singing, then they probably have the section perfect!
 - h. VIDEO helpers – <http://band.mrhait.com/video>
 - i. Metronome – info on website
 - j. iPad apps –Bandmate app (free), Pitch Perfect Visual Tuner Pro \$1.99, Pitch Me \$2.99 - Traces melody 4 or 5 pitches, insTuner Free
4. NYSSMA / SCMEA / ALL-STATE / All National
- a. The entry door to advanced musical performance opportunities begins with NYSSMA Solo Festival.
 - b. The NYSSMA Solo Festival (New York State School Music Association) occurs each year in April or May. Students who choose to become more advanced learn a Solo from an approved list of songs. In addition to the song, students have to learn scales. The higher the level that they attend, the more difficult the song is and the more scales the student has to know. The student plays his or her solo and scales in front of a NYSSMA Judge (a Certified Music Teacher) and is given comments to improve their playing.
 - c. Based on the score that the student receives in NYSSMA, he or she will be nominated and possibly accepted into the SCMEA All-County festival, All-State festival, or All-National festival.
5. Concerts
- a. Winter Concert – December 15, 2016 at CIHS
 - b. Spring Concert – May 31, 2016 at CIHS
 - c. NYSSMA Majors (This is different than the Solo festival) – April or May, 2017

A proper practice session should last approximately 20 minutes

1. Play all of the scales that you are responsible for using whole notes – or longer notes (4 beats on each note, or longer). Most students are responsible now for 2 or 3 scales.
 - a. Focus on the sound of each note – so that it does not sound ‘wavy’ -- so each note sounds beautiful
2. Take out your Yellow and White checklists and start working on the next section that needs Mr. Hait’s signature. If you are learning a new section, Count it – Sing it – Play it.
 - a. Notice – Most of the time in learning a new section is Counting and Singing!

3. As the student starts getting more and more sections 'Checked Off' or 'Signed Off', there are more musical elements that the student can work on
 - a. Dynamics – Is the section Loud or Soft?
 - i. Pianissimo (pp)
 - ii. Piano (p)
 - iii. Mezzo piano (mp)
 - iv. Mezzo forte (mf)
 - v. Forte (F)
 - vi. Fortissimo (FF)
 - b. Articulation – Is the section slurred, accented, legato, etc.
 - i. Slur – tongue the first note, not the rest of the notes
 - ii. Accented – Play the note strongly
 - iii. Legato – Long, Smooth, and Connected sounding
 - c. Phrasing – Can the performer play for 4 or 8 measures without taking a breath?

Suggested list of practice aids:

Metronome, Tuner, Music books with popular songs or holiday songs from a music store

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Parent Handout

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 - c. 'Yellow Checklist'
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 - e. If I notice a child is having difficulty, I ask him or her 'Did you practice the way we discussed?' and the answer is often 'No.'
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