

Basic Suggestions on Online Band Instruction That We are Trying at CT Johnson HS

By Jarrett Lipman

These ideas require that students have access to a mobile device, tablet, or PC. With the increased emphasis on student safety, appropriate conduct, as well as educator and student boundaries, there will undoubtedly be more guidelines coming. Those discussions will likely occur soon if they've not happened already. Don't try anything without approval and or authorization from your administration and use a district computer/software so you have a record of everything you do. The main platforms we have explored:

Zoom Video Conferencing —

Regular subscription is free - has some time limits. If you get the pro subscription, you can waive the 40-minute time limit and have up to 100 students at a time on the call. Student subscriptions are free, you setup meetings/webinars.

The software offers "meetings" and "webinars." Meetings are interactive, like a class - webinars more like a lecture, or a band parent meeting. For a normal sectional, lesson, or masterclass, we have used the meeting feature. You can invite students on video conference or audio-only and have them play by themselves or as a group. We have broken our ensembles into their groups of 6-8 ... Tuba/euphonium, trombone, horn, trumpet, clarinet - smaller groups tend to work best, but depending on how our district approaches things, this could change after this week.

When they are playing as a group, you will deal with a delay - so I would encourage you to count them off visually or use Tonal Energy on Screen-share with a visual count down — but don't spend much time now trying to synch them up. Ultimately, at this time, I have found there isn't much benefit to them playing together for feedback, but they can certainly go through your daily drill at the very least.

We are working mostly in these group sessions on fundamentals to build their skills. Counting exercises, solfeggio exercises, long tones, slurs, articulation, and technique. They are also each selecting an etude or solo to dig in on and perform for the group.

Group feedback will be related to musicality, phrasing, direction, style, articulation, flexibility, tone quality, rhythmic accuracy, and helping the kids learn both to listen to and analyze a higher level of detail. The individual down the line feedback is great.

Some of what has worked well so far —

1) Call & Response or Model and Ensemble — One student plays model, the rest of group mimics/copies - no issues with the delay because the kids are reacting to sound not visual; students try to copy the model in tone, energy, style, etc.

2) One student plays, you coach them, the student plays again - others listen, then try to apply feedback to their performance.

3) One student plays, you ask other students to critique.

4) Give students 2-3 minutes on their own to go on mute and practice a specific part of the exercise with tuner or metronome.

5) Listen to different recordings of pieces and discuss various aspects of the music— interpretation, style, tempo, etc. Great role models.

6) Because they can see one another's faces while playing, you can call attention to details like tension, or extraneous muscle movement - or raise awareness about correct embouchure, hand position, and whether they are taking a proper breath.

SKYPE, Slack, or Facetime —

Virtual lessons - one on one - same idea but frees up the Zoom platform if your other ensembles want to use it for group meetings.

Setup a google doc with open times to allow students to sign-up to work with you, they will dial in or call as scheduled.

Sample schedule

Next week - could be mornings; use the staff to split up the kids; alternate every other day one section or individual practice, the other coaching, etc.

Wind Ensemble Masterclass Schedule 3-17-20

	10:00am - 10:55am	11:00am - 11:55am	12:00 - 12:55pm	1:00 - 1:55pm	2:00 - 2:55pm	3:00 - 4:30pm
Monday 3-16-20; Singing Scale in 5ths, Perfect 4th exercise, Rhythmic Emphasis, Elgar, Copland	Euphonium & Tuba;	Trombone	Lunch	Clarinet	Flute, Oboe	Pass-offs
	10:00am - 10:55am	11:00am - 11:55am	12:00 - 12:55pm	1:00 - 1:55pm	2:00 - 2:55pm	3:00 - 4:30pm
Tuesday 3-17-20; Singing Scale in 5ths, Perfect 4th exercise, Rhythmic Emphasis, Elgar, Copland	Trumpet	Horn	Lunch	Bass Clarinet, Bassoon	Saxophone	Pass-offs
	10:00am - 10:55am	11:00am - 11:55am	12:00 - 12:55pm	1:00 - 1:55pm	2:00 - 2:55pm	3:00 - 4:30pm
Wednesday 3-18-20; Singing Scale in 5ths, Perfect 4th exercise, Rhythmic Emphasis, Elgar, Copland	Teacher meetings	Teacher meetings	Lunch	Pass-offs	Pass-offs	Pass-offs