

## eRehearsals with Zoom

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WOW! What a year this week has been! As you all are aware, Covid-19 has caused us as educators to have to adapt very quickly to eLearning. I started up this week and learned quickly that eLearning is going to be evolving constantly and rapidly. This article will be a resource for you as a band director to “Zoom” into the future of eRehearsals!

I am fortunate enough to work with an amazing staff of directors at Maus Middle School. We started by experimenting with the video conferencing platform called Zoom. We hosted conferences with each other to figure out the basics. I hosted the Zoom meetings most of the time and my co-workers, Lauren Solano and Thomas Brink, helped me by explaining what they saw on their end. Through trial and error, along with help from other colleagues, we were able to familiarize ourselves enough with the features we would need to conduct our first eRehearsal on Tuesday, March 17th. I have worked with it for only 4 days now, so I am not a Zoom expert, but I have learned quite a bit in this time!

This is the best thing for students right now. They are craving the time with their friends, to have a sense of normalcy and to see their band directors! All of our students have been ecstatic to join our Zoom eRehearsals. Through these eRehearsals, we are trying different teaching methods, using trial and error. Will this replace live rehearsals? Absolutely not! It’s not even close, BUT we owe it to our students to give it a try for a sense of connection and community during social distancing. Do the kids sound the same? Not even close, BUT they are trying! It brought tears to my eyes this week to see our students and to learn that they want to succeed in the eRehearsal setting just as much as they do in live rehearsals!

Here are some tips for using Zoom for eRehearsals with your band students in the upcoming times. Please note that this information is for the temporarily free version of Zoom only. Some upgraded versions have cool added features, so please look into it: [Zoom Meetings](#). I have also started an eResources Google Drive so we can collaborate with each other to help everyone through this new journey. Please email me for access to this drive - my information is at the conclusion of this article.

## A Beginner's Guide to Zoom (from someone who learned in 4 days!)

- Set up your Zoom account. You will go through a series of settings. Be sure to disable the chat and set the participants to be muted upon entry into the eRehearsal.
  - This keeps the students from speaking loudly and you can set up the expectations for the eRehearsal. Share these expectations in advance on social media, through email or in your Canvas/Google Classroom.
- Give a definitive start and end time for your Zoom; thirty minutes is a good time frame usually. Zoom Meeting Etiquette is to start the room at least 5 minutes before the meeting. Students or co-workers can have time to get into the room and get settled. Have a screenshot of the rules for the room - use Screen Share to do this.
  - This gives them ground rules beforehand. If using Google Slides or PowerPoint, be sure to put the slide in a presentation mode so it's big enough for them on their screens. (examples for this are in the eResources Google Drive)
  - You can edit documents or type live and the students can see what you are doing. Fair warning - they can write on their screens too, so maybe don't mention that to them or give them 5 seconds to do so.
- Wear headphones that plug into a laptop or desktop preferably. If that is not an option, you could also use earbuds that plug into a device or laptop. A last resort would be airpods. We have found these to be unreliable with sound on the participants' end when performing. The worst option is nothing as this causes too much background noise when students speak or perform. Communicate this to students ahead of time as well.
- While you are hosting, you will need to keep watching the Manage Participants panel to allow people to join the meeting or not. We ask all students to type at least their first name and last initial.
  - This will keep them from typing Dr. Vader and muting their video so you don't know who they are.
- Show participants how to use Participants tools such as: like, dislike, yes, no, clap, raise hand, break, go slower, go faster, and I need more time. You can also choose in the settings clap out where EVERYONE can see the reactions in the Zoom and thumbs up to like something they said or performed. We use the like for asking yes/no questions to see if they understand quickly and the clap for clapping for each other!

- Some technological platforms (i.e iPhones, Androids, iPads) seem to be inconsistent with which participant functions they can access. The only ones that are on every platform are the clap and thumbs up for the group.
- Show the students how to turn the sound and video on and off on their own. Ask them that if they unmute to ask a question, they mute themselves again.
- If the host mutes the participants, it has an option to “Allow participants to unmute themselves” - you can choose whether or not to allow that. If a student is being silly on the video, you can mute their video as the host and they can’t come back onto the video. If they want to come back onto the video, it asks you for permission first.
- Breakout Rooms are a way for you to work with smaller groups of participants. We have a section about them below as this seems to be the best way to hear individual students and groups perform.
- You can record the whole meeting if you would like. The file can save to the cloud or your computer.
  - FYI: All the participants' videos cannot be recorded when in breakout rooms, which we will discuss below. It will only record what you as the host are seeing on your screen. I do tell the students that they are being recorded at all times though.
  - I manually assign my co-workers to be in the other breakout rooms to monitor, or a trusted leader, just like in the regular classroom.
- The chat feature is great when zooming with staff members or larger groups from your team at school, but you will want to disable the Chat feature with students. You can do this ahead of the meeting or on the fly once a meeting starts. You will go to Chat and click the three dots to disable for everyone.
- Participants can change the virtual background to be something personal. We told the students to have a good virtual background ready for eRehearsal the second day and they loved it! I warned them to be appropriate up front.
- You also have the ability to mute a participant's video for the remainder of the eRehearsal if they are not following instructions and you can also remove a participant. They have to request access back for video and into the room.

### Breakout Rooms

- Breakout rooms are the best! The host assigns students into smaller groups, or they can be assigned automatically. You can set up how many rooms you want to have available and you can move participants around if you’d like.
  - Students can meet in smaller groups so they can play for each other and ask questions. Unfortunately, students can chat here and you cannot disable this feature. I set up ground rules that they do not use this feature

and remind them they are “recorded”. I also have a co-worker or trusted section leader in each breakout room.

- Give the students direction here (i.e. play Chord Study 1 in Bb for each other and give peer evaluation). The host can toggle between rooms while they are meeting, but co-hosts do not have this ability.
- Try to keep your Breakout rooms smaller in size so all students can participate in the process. I would give a time frame so they know the parameters ahead of time. As the host you can also make a written announcement to all rooms (Broadcast message function).
  - I use this function to say “You have 30 seconds to wrap up” or “Don’t forget to evaluate.”
- Once the time is up, you can close the Breakout rooms. If the students can, ask them to leave the room on their own. If they don’t it takes one minute for everyone to funnel back into the main room.
- To leave a meeting, click the option in the bottom right corner. You can also force someone to leave if they don’t on their own, and they can’t rejoin.
- If you recorded the meeting, it will download afterward and it takes a bit.

More about Zoom abilities can be viewed here: [Video Resources](#)

I would love to be a resource for you in this time of uncertainty and change!

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