

I Just Wanna Play Drums:

Reinvent your Percussion Section

❖ Culture

1. Unpacking the “percussionist”

Percussionists are hard to work with.

- Many directors seem to have this idea that percussionists can be hard students to work with. Some may very well be difficult, but could it be that we don't fully understand them?
- Why are they here? What do they want out of this band experience? What do they think the experience will be like? All of these preconceived ideas influence how we feel about something etc.
- Now think about it, you sign up for drums but are told to sign up for band under something called “percussion.” What does the student really want? They want to play drums. Blinded by their limited experiences, they likely want to be a drum set player aspiring to be like one of their favorite band's drummer, etc.
 - Our concert band experience doesn't fit this quota. How do we bring our students to appreciate what we love so much?
- Students are students, they only know what they know. Most percussionists come into percussion expecting one thing and receiving something completely different.

2. Redirecting the “percussionist”

All my percussion students ever want to do is hit things...

- Meet your percussion students at their needs and maturity level. In most cases, this means starting your percussionists with non-tonal instruments etc. (more on percussion pedagogy later).
- How do we get our students from “wanna hit things” to classically trained musician?
- Exposure - show them what is possible in the world of percussion
 - Marching Band
 - Winter Percussion
 - Chamber Percussion (duo, trio, quartet)
 - Percussion Ensemble
 - Other

- Outside of video exposure, bring in artists/percussion coaches that can relate to your student's experiences and exemplify/model the behavior and artistry you hope to see in your students.
 - PAS - Nor Cal
 - PAS - Fresno
 - WGI / NCPA Shows
 - Percussion Ensemble Concerts - ie. SJ Perc Studio Concerts etc.
- Exposure Playlist -> tinyurl.com/percvideosforstudents
 - Play a video (2 options)
 - ◆ [NO one To kNOW one, by Andy Akiho](#)
 - ◆ [Julie Davila - Stool Pigeon](#)

3. Create a sense of community among your percussionists

As we know, many students aren't here for the sheer love of music...

- Percussionists are virtually needed in every idiom of music in any program. Use this to your advantage. This can be a great way to build a strong social network amongst your students.
- Stress the importance of community with your students, encouraging them to always take care of one another - supportive, etc.
- Community plays a huge role in accelerating any momentum the program may start to pick up.
- Feedback Loops - negative/positive

4. Express value towards your percussionists & add responsibilities

Percussionists are used to being left to their own devices - in the back unattended.

- Challenge your students just like you challenge your classroom.
- Explain to your students the job of a percussionist
 - Ie. every part is a solo. Each note is important. Emphasis on characteristic sound.

❖ **Philosophy**

- It is easier to develop a good habit than break a bad habit.
 - Take time on fundamentals to save time. Don't save time on fundamentals only to have to take more time later on.
- Start students with drumming before moving to mallet percussion
 - Helps support the good habit vs. bad habit idea
 - Students must first learn the mechanics of using their wrist etc. (highly technical) before they can apply that same skill with tonal responsibilities

- A minute at the middle school is worth more than an hour at the high school
 - Education at the feeder program should always be the focus. Time is best spent with younger students.
 - In hyper academic Silicon valley, I find it is very useful to create after school percussion programs. Not only does the instruction help, but it also normalizes
 - Free time is always taken in the Bay Area. If they aren't in music, they will be put in another class. Give them an opportunity to attend middle school with the hope that it stays on their schedule for high school.
 - Retention from middle school to high school is all about creating more ties from high schoolers to middle schoolers
 - Mentorship programs
 - Open workshops at the high school
 - Surprise performances (drumline, etc.)
- Student centered instruction
 - Most students aren't in band for the love of music
 - Build rapport with the students by taking inventory of their likes and find ways to blend this into your curriculum / classroom
 - Meet students where they are at
- Music should be about having fun and musicking
 - Teach students to appreciate the ability to play music with others / self-expression

❖ Pedagogy

➤ Sight Reading

- Rhythmic Sight Reading
 - Start with rhythm tree (notes and rests)
 - Teach the 5 boxes
 - Daily rhythmic patterns applying boxes and rhythm tree
 - ◆ Counting
 - ◆ Counting + Clapping
 - ◆ Counting + Clapping + Feet
 - ◆ Clapping only
 - ◆ Playing - apply stockings (natural vs. alternating)
 - Sight Reading Factory
 - ◆ Select snare music and various levels to integrate snare specific skill sets.
- Melodic Sight Reading
 - Scales + scale degrees
 - Assign scale degrees to rhythmic sight reading
 - ◆ Teaches transposition
 - ◆ Fun way to practice scales

- Mallet Choice

❖ Organization

❖ General Tips

➤ Purchases

❖ Resources

➤ [PAS Membership](#)

➤ [Vic Firth Percussion 101](#)

➤ [The Complete Percussionist](#)

➤ [Home Study \(snare/mallets\)](#)