

CMEA Conference - Friday, November 15th, 2024

“Ideas I STOLE from other teachers”

Presenter: Helene Grotans - Borel Middle School - San Mateo, CA

ORGANIZATION

1. “Mise en place” / “Mise en scene”
2. Name Tags on stands
3. Open Seats. No chairs.
4. Method book
5. Breaks/Stories

LESSONS

1. Start every day without the book - ear training
2. Finger Warm-Ups or something memorized
3. Practice Sheets - Listening - Concert Dates
4. Red/Blue colored pencil for COLOR DYNAMICS
5. Classroom set of tuners
6. Make Music Cloud/Smart Music
7. “SOLOS” (Duets, Trios, Quartets)
8. Celebrate random holidays
9. Holiday Songs - Chrismahanukwanzakah Winter Solstice
10. Random teaching tools

MOTIVATION

1. Orchestra Karate
2. Olympic Orchestra Challenge - Make Music Cloud
3. HOW TO QUIZ
4. Random Raffles
5. ASK: What is the point?
6. Positive Gossip about students
7. Guest teachers/Coaches in the classroom
8. CMEA Honor Ensembles or All-State
9. Create the program you want
10. Field Trips

PERFORMANCES

1. “In-class concerts”
2. Saying YES to community performances
3. “Flash Mobs”
4. Concerts and Recitals
5. Concert Program backwards plan
6. Props

COMMUNITY BUILDING

1. Birthday Bombs
2. Birthday Music Stand/Golden Music Stand
3. Hallway of Student Photos
4. Music Tutor Program

MORE THOUGHTS

Modeling is so important. If I'm prepared early and arrive before the bell, the students see I do that for them and that I'm not asking too much in return by having them do it. I explain that I'm teaching them HOW to practice. What it looks like to find a quiet place for 20-30 minutes, then warm-up, play something joyful and then struggle with something - a puzzle that is good for the brain. Part of the deal is just SHOWING UP every day. Consistency in your community and in your school. Don't be so tied to your lesson plan that you can't make alterations. Monitoring and adjusting is key. MONDAYS - are brutal. Keep it simple, full of review and set up the goals for the week.

The reality of instrument/music study - Just like with math classes or foreign languages, music teaches kids discipline, HOW to think and to problem solve. I explain to them that some of them could one day play their instrument professionally, others semi-professionally, some as a hobby and for some, it will be a fun memory from middle school. But the fact that they are doing it now will have a myriad of benefits on their life, personality and learning.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I often think that we are in a Customer Service position. But also maybe it's like we're Business owners. We open our shop doors and the customers come in. Then we either get to manage employees and/or try to get these customers to buy what we're selling. We have to solve so many problems. The weather changes have made the instruments out of tune. Someone accidentally dumped their full water bottle in their backpack. They forgot all of their materials and/or an instrument. The school bus was late. They left an instrument on the bus.

When I worked in Customer Service, my job was to let the customer know that I was there to help and that they could relax. In class, I can fix the broken string or the bridge that fell down. I have extra copies of their music. I have an extra instrument they can play today, if they forgot theirs. I'm just glad they showed up to my little shop.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Our best teaching days are when we can be our best, hydrated, rested and alert selves. The days that I arrive 30 minutes early or more always go the best. But on those other days - when there is highway traffic or I just left a little too late, my students know how to set the room themselves and they are gracious with me. We practice chair set up, I compliment them on it and they know there are both types of days for Ms. Grotans.

Get yourself inspired DAILY. Download Ed and Music Ed audiobooks. (Teach Like a Champion). Listen to Ed podcasts. (After Sectionals, Composer of the Week, Sticky Notes: Classical Music Podcast, Strong Songs, The History of Rock Music in 500 songs, Band Meets Strings!) Facebook Groups (Middle School Band Directors, School Orchestra and String Teachers). We can just try to be the best that we are able to, given our life situation at that moment and what is happening at various times in our lives.

SHARE YOUR STOLEN IDEAS! (OR YOUR IDEAS, SO WE CAN STEAL THEM!)