



## Research (RE1)

MUS 613.001 Seminar: Theory

American Band College at Central Washington University

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>D113 High School Band</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>D114 High School Band</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>D115 Middle School Band</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>D116 Middle School Band</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>D117 High School Band</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>D118 Middle School Band</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>19</b>



# Introduction



Kelly Connell is the Assistant Band Director at Aldine Middle School (Houston, TX). She is currently in her fifth year of teaching, and her third year at Aldine Middle School. Connell conducts concert band, beginning woodwind classes, and assists the symphonic band. Under her direction, the AMS Concert Band received Superior ratings at the UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Contest in 2017 and 2018.

Prior to working in Houston, Connell served two years as Music Director at Holyoke Community Charter School (Holyoke, MA) where she built the school's inaugural Music Department. During that time, Connell was also the Founder and Director of the Pioneer Valley Beginner Band Camp (South Hadley, MA) and a member of Leap of Faith Jazz Combo (Springfield, MA).

Connell graduated from the University of Dayton (Dayton, OH) where she received dual degrees: a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education with concentrations in Urban Education and Instrumental Music; a Bachelor of Arts in Human Rights Studies; and a Minor in Philosophy. While at UD, she was Principal Flutist of all performance ensembles.

Connell has won several awards in her field, including most recently the Sigma Alpha Iota—Professional Development/Education Grant (March 2018). She is an active member of Sigma Alpha Iota, the National Association for Music Education, the Texas Music Education Association, the National Flute Association, and the Texas Bandmasters Association.

Ms. Connell is currently pursuing a Master of Music Education in Band Conducting through the American Band College of Central Washington University.



# Evaluation Criteria



All public school band programs in the state of Texas are required to compete in contest through the University Interscholastic League (UIL). According to the UIL Constitution, “The purpose of the UIL music contests and events are to provide statewide music competitions and evaluations that foster high performance standards, nurture aesthetic development and assess the mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Music<sub>1</sub>.” I will be utilizing the UIL judging form (located on page 4) as a guide to provide comments in order to help each ensemble improve.

# Evaluation Criteria

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## UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

# CONCERT

### Entry Blank and Comment Sheet

Please read the current issue of the Constitution and Contest Rules

School \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Conference \_\_\_\_\_ Organization Event \_\_\_\_\_

Contest Date \_\_\_\_\_ Performing Group Type \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Students \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Director \_\_\_\_\_ Additional Directors \_\_\_\_\_

Composer/Arranger	Title of selections and movements	UIL ID#
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

#### TONE

- + - Centered, focused tone quality
- + - Balance within sections
- + - Balance between sections
- + - Intonation within sections
- + - Intonation between sections
- + - Dynamic contrasts without distortion

#### TECHNIQUE

- + - Note Accuracy
- + - Manual dexterity and flexibility
- + - Rhythmic accuracy
- + - Rhythmic stability
- + - Appropriate mastery of articulation
- + - Observance of ties, slurs and articulation markings

#### MUSICIANSHIP

- + - Appropriateness of style
- + - Sensitivity to phrasing
- + - Observance of musical markings
- + - Appropriateness of dynamic contrasts
- + - Appropriate observance of tempo
- + - Demonstrates musical understanding

OTHER COMMENTS (No rating applies)

**FINAL RATING**      I    II    III    IV    V

Write in rating here \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of official \_\_\_\_\_



# D113 High School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

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The woodwind feature (0:25) needs to contrast from the strong introduction in the first piece. In order to achieve this, the clarinets need to play softer and lighter. Keep the embouchure just as firm but use enough air to play a strong mezzo-piano/mezzo-forte. When the clarinets enter the feature at a drastically softer dynamic, it sets the tone for the next section and for the woodwinds that follow. The flutes, for their part, sound lovely during their entrance in this section (0:32). I would have the flutes play their entrance and have the ensemble listen and model. The saxophones are doing a great job with note accuracy, balance and blend...but I would address their fuzzy, nasally tone quality (0:55). Reeds must be thoroughly soaked, and jaws relaxed. This ensemble has a very strong flute section! Great intonation during the flute feature in the second piece (2:20). The saxophones have very mature sounds and are playing very sensitively to the style (3:33), but they should be careful not to overpower the trumpets; rather, balance and blend. Fit *into* the trumpet sound. Clarinet tone quality sounds a bit breathy during the trio (5:15). To achieve a warmer sound, reeds must be thoroughly soaked, embouchures firm, and maybe try exploring different reed strengths. Near the end of the piece, before the ritardando (6:03), the saxophones have fast moving eighth notes. The very tip of the tongue needs to be touching the tip of the reed, and musicians must sustain a strong stream of air through their instrument to support the separated articulation.

## ≧Brass≦

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Later in the piece (1:15), notes can be a little more separated across all brass. It sounds like half of the low brass is playing short and separated and half is not. The entire section need to agree on a note length and stick to it. Watch out for trumpet intonation at (1:20)! In rehearsal, I would suggest holding each note and tuning them individually. A few measures later at (1:33), after the grand pause, the trumpet entrance needs to sound as strong and confident as the first measure of the entire piece. As the piece goes on, and students get more tired, the embouchure needs to get firmer. At the end of the piece (1:48), the pyramid of sound really needs to be emphasized: trumpets are no longer the loudest instruments heard. They need to blend back into the ensemble sound, and more low tones need to be present. The second piece starts as the first piece ended (2:02): block chords with sound pyramid. The trumpets need to blend into the full ensemble sound until they have the melody later! The low brass have a great strong, supported sound at (2:08)! Take the sound you have here and apply it to your first piece! The trumpets might be over-blowing in general; consider having trumpets decrease their overall sound by 20% so they can make it through these pieces without tiring out halfway through. The trombone glissandos (6:20) are awesome—really strong and even. It sounds like the band really enjoyed playing this piece!



# D113 High School Band

## ⇒Percussion⇐

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The timpani is very strong, but starts to fall behind, leaving more notes to be played when the band has already transitioned to the woodwind section (0:25). It is important to know your part, but to also listen to how it fits into the ensemble so you can lock in. The triangle part sounds great at (0:35), but consider using a heavier beater for more sound. At (1:27) it sounds as if the snare drum is slowing down the entire band by almost 20 BPM. Not only do the snare drum players need to stay in time with the conductor, but perhaps they should practice running through their part with a metronome: start at a comfortable speed (20 clicks below performance speed) and increase the tempo. I would go as far as to suggest practicing *faster* than the performance tempo, so that settling into the performance speed is not a challenge. Moving on to the second piece, snare drum does an excellent job establishing style and speed in the first two measures (1:55)! The bells sound great with the flute feature (2:57). Strike each bell evenly, so the volume of sound is consistent from note to note. At (5:15), were the temple blocks late? Have all instruments set up in a way that students can move from one instrument to another without needing to set up or grab anything out of their way, or reevaluate percussion assignments.

## ⇒Overall⇐

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This group consists of some very fine musicians! Most of the issues I heard were universal throughout all pieces. Flutes need to constantly listen and blend throughout all pieces, and reed players should soak their reeds adequately so their tone is not fuzzy. Trumpets often have the melody, but never play past best sounds. If the trumpets are consistently getting tired halfway through a piece, they likely forcing too much. The low brass section is really strong, but must articulate firmly and always play with a strong sound. The percussion section is really doing a fine job as well. My greatest concern is the snare drum—it *cannot* slow down, it is currently affecting the entire band greatly.

The whole band needs to match articulations. If the trumpets are playing a melodic line that echoes (0:12), then everyone else needs to match their articulation. This requires the band to listen across the ensemble and be cognizant of what is happening around them. As a suggestion, I would experiment having this band play the first piece 20-40 BPM faster and see how it goes; a faster speed might be better for this group! Balance needs to be addressed constantly. From what I am hearing, trumpets reign supreme. Though that often is the case in this literature, it is not exclusive. Have students mark in their music who to balance to.



# D114 High School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

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Great, strong, confident woodwind entrance (0:14)! Watch tuning and keep reeds vibrating with lots of air - even when playing soft. The flute intonation at (0:32) was very wonky; listen to trios and adjust as necessary. I would tune this section individually since it is so exposed. Saxophones later have the same issue (0:42). The woodwind trill at (1:20) is very even...good air support too! The high register in the flutes at (1:42) is much more in tune. Those lower range notes from earlier might be more challenging to play, but they cannot be an afterthought. Address tuning in the low register the same way you would in the high register: tank up on warm air! (2:47) sounds like a fun clarinet feature. But since it is so exposed, so challenging, and so soft, I would suggest making it a soli and having only a few strong clarinets play at a full volume. It will avoid pinched sounds and allow for a relaxed tone. At the end of the phrase (3:00), low reeds need to play *through* the notes all the way to the rests. Great saxophone entrance at (3:15)—nice, centered, focused tone qualities! (3:26) is another fun woodwind section! A great job by flutes and clarinets playing with clarity, confidence, and stability. All those things are not only exclusive to the first 3 measures, but for the entire phrase. Though other instruments layer in, your part is still heard and important. Great balance and blend at the end, and clarinet falls are very even (5:44, 6:06). Well done!

## ≧Brass≦

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When low brass enters together at (0:19), chords need to be lined up. Practice attacking the first note together, then the first measure together, until one strong low brass sound is achieved. Watch trombone tuning at (0:30). Play note by note, make adjustments, and write them in parts. *This band is too good to be having such blatant tuning problems!* Nice trumpet solo at (0:44), although overall pitch is on the flatter side. Hold each note to a metronome and adjust. When playing the repeated notes later (1:15), use a lighter (tip) tongue so they do not blat (it will also be easier to play). When horns are exposed (1:50), jaws, mouths, and embouchures keep still—there is a lot of movement in the sound during the held and repeated notes. First trumpets sound tired at (2:08). Consider sharing solo sections amongst multiple players, spending more time on fundamentals focusing on the second/third register, or having the trumpets relax their dynamic levels a little bit. Experiment and see what works with this group. Avoid gurgle-y entrances (3:40): spit valves need to be relieved between pieces; embouchure and air prepared. The trumpet run at (4:17) was excellent—great dexterity, balance, intonation, and articulation! High notes =/= loud notes (5:51). Always play with control and maturity, no matter how challenging the music may be!



# D114 High School Band

## ≧Percussion≦

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A great bell entrance (0:09)! As instruments are added in, do not slow down! The bell part is pretty repetitive – perhaps try memorizing it and look at the director the entire time. The bells establish the melody, and then it gets passed on to other sections of the band. When this occurs, the bells should back off so the other sections can be heard (1:17). Chimes must be hit together (0:11). The suspended cymbal part is great throughout! I would suggest experimenting with letting it ring longer so it better helps with phrase transitioning (0:38). Bass drums should be *felt* and not heard (1:44). Think less about hitting the bass drum, and more so pulling the sound out of it. Whoever are playing snare drum, timpani, and tambourine are not messing around (2:12; 2:35, 2:50)! Can I have you all in my band?! If I was being picky, I would invite the snare drum to come in more confidently on entrances, and put more emphasis on accents. The snare drum also sounds more muffled than I think is needed for this piece (4:05). Snare heads need to be tuned; also loosen snares and slowly tighten until the sweet spot in snare response is heard. If it is still ringing, use a little moon-gel. Beautiful percussion ritardando at (4:45). Watch entrances later – always be counting (5:20). Legato sections can be challenging to count, but if you look up at the director, they are likely to cue you or at least show you where the beat is. When the second piece transitions to a faster, military style, I truly enjoyed listening to the percussion matching style and articulation perfectly. Well done!

## ≧Overall≦

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This is a very strong ensemble. If I was to use one word to describe this band's plight, it would be *intonation*. It seems to be a weakness across all sections. Make it a habit to tune daily in class, even if it is only a few sections, or have tubas hold a concert F and have everyone adjust. Playing "F Around the Room" is a great exercise that can be used daily as part of a regular warm up regimen to get musicians to use their ears. I often struggled to hear the clarinets play, other than their soli/feature sections. I think if intonation is addressed, this section has the potential to be a powerhouse group!

The trumpets need greater control over embouchure: many entrances sounded uncontrolled. As previously mentioned, fundamentals never hurt anyone. Remington exercises, flow studies, or any exercise focusing on developing the higher register will be incredibly helpful in developing a trumpet section with strong tone quality and high register!

I felt like I had to be relatively nit-picky with the percussion, because, frankly, they are on the right track! There are some fine musicians back there! But remember that soft does not equal slow. Always be counting and staying with the director, no matter the style.

With these suggested areas addressed, this band has the potential to be a powerhouse! Keep it up!



# D115 Middle School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

The first thing to catch my ear was the awesome low reed sound (0:16). Be sure to always be integrating your sound into the low brass. I am very impressed by the woodwinds' musical maturity – specifically ensemble balance and intonation (0:35). During all the beautiful flute features, we need to hear more vibrato (0:50); let the air spin and pulse from the diaphragm! Practicing this during rehearsal warm ups when the rest of the band is doing long tones (pulsing vibrato) might help make this a regular part of the flute routine. Excellent releases at the ends of phrases (1:05)! The flutes sound bogged down on the low notes (1:26) –try pushing a lot of warm air *through* each note. As a suggestion to the director, it might be interesting to experiment with taking some of the section up an octave! As the piece progresses, phrase releases are getting choked (2:08). Let them taper and be consistent. Some of the second and third clarinet tones are sounding very nasally (2:11). Watch the tongue placement – keep tongue in “hiss” formation! The low reed's counter-melody is lovely, but be careful to not take over the whole piece (2:50). When two melodies are being played at the same time, they should generally be heard fifty-fifty. Before the last two notes of the first piece, I would suggest having the entire band write NB or “no breath” before (3:15). Breathing before the last two notes sounds very huffy-puffy, and not very mature. Create a breathing plan for sections if necessary.

## ≧Brass≦

In the very beginning of the piece, it is hard to tell if the problem in the trumpet section is intonation, dissonant tone quality, or both (0:08). But either way, the trumpet section must sound like one big trumpet sound! Keep jaws and throats relaxed and fill your diaphragm with air. I am very impressed by the musical and stylistic understanding demonstrated by the trumpets (0:25). They are doing a wonderful job setting the tone for the entire band to follow—excellent! Later, when low brass are playing the short down beats, think about *pressing* into them, not throwing them (0:56). All notes in the lows must be aligned. I would suggest taking time in class to practice this for precision's sake. At (2:11), the brass section does an excellent job playing in tune and balancing to the woodwinds. Later, at (2:30) there are multiple musical ideas going on at the same time. It is okay to play your line out, low brass! As the piece goes on and the dynamic increases, I am continuing to hear more low reeds, but not more low brass to match (3:09). Play out! I am starting to sense a pattern here...In the second piece, the entrance is suppose to be a call and response (3:20). Woodwinds do a wonderful job establishing a strong sound, but brass needs to match it in response! As I continue to listen, it is clear that this brass section has a great sense of style, articulation, rhythm, intonation, and chordal balance...but I am just not hearing enough of it (5:27). Let us hear your beautiful brass sounds!



# D115 Middle School Band

## ⇒Percussion⇐

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Great dynamic control in the beginning, but back off so that when the melody comes in so we can hear it (0:15)! Whoever is playing bells is *awesome* (0:45). There is so much finesse in the playing and it is blending so perfectly with the melody! Snare drum and bass drum – do not slam fortes (1:03); rather, match the style of the piece. Flams are also dangerously close together (1:45). Space will be consistent if practiced with a metronome – starting at a slow speed and increasing over time. The percussion section is really doing a great job blending into the winds and enhancing the overall listening experience (2:09)! The snare drummer has a great sense of style and articulation and plays with a great deal of maturity. Crash cymbals could be a little louder (3:00). I would suggest trying to imitate the way they are being played in the second piece (6:20). I would like to feel the bass drum a little more at (4:30). Press more into the bass drum and pull the sound out with more on the up stroke. Later in the second piece at (4:55), the bells should not overpower the wind melody, but rather match their lightness. Play with either a lighter, plastic mallet, or strike the bells more delicately. At the very end of the piece, do not let the bass drum resonate past the whole band’s last sound (6:40). Gently muffle at the cut off.

## ⇒Overall⇐

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This is a high quality middle school band. I am floored by the sensitivity, maturity, and musical understanding of this group. Be sure to always be matching articulation: having students use and write in their music “Dee” versus “Doh” can make a huge change in the quality in the music. Practice articulations as part of daily warm ups, and/or isolated in rehearsal. If articulations start to sound unmatched, do not let the band get away with it! This group is too good for that. I think I mentioned this multiple times in the brass section, but this band is seriously lacking low brass sound. From what I heard, there are some great sounds back there, but they need to be heard—please play out! The trumpet section played with some very clear, mature tones – congratulations! The bell players were excellent as well. Be sure to match the dynamics of any melody that is being doubled. If everyone is playing soft, the bells need to match. Congratulations on an excellent performance. The pieces played were an excellent fit for this ensemble.



# D116 Middle School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

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During the flute entrance, tone quality sounds very airy (0:30). The important things to remedy are long tones, demanding harmonic exercises *daily*. Start on second octave C and overblow to the F above, then descend chromatically, slowly. Incorporating that into your flute's routine regularly will turn the whole section around! When playing bassline down beats, the notes should not be overblown, but rather placed or pet (0:49). I like to give the analogy of petting an animal – I would not hit an animal to pet it. Petting is rhythmic, relaxed, and has weight. I am hearing a lot of intonation problems mixed with many wrong notes (1:30). This is a very exposed piece, and woodwind runs with incorrect notes will stick out like a sore thumb. Practice in sectionals and slowly increase speed. A chair test on these sections might motivate students to take their music home and really assure they know their notes. Later, alto saxophones need to better blend into the melody (1:50). If you cannot hear the melody, you are too loud. I continue to hear a lot of intonation issues (3:14). With this group, it needs to be emphasized daily. The longer you allow students to play out of tune, you are teaching them to hear incorrect intervals. In this section, it would help if the clarinets filled their horns with more air, and allowed the reed to vibrate more; that would certainly help with intonation!

## ≧Brass≦

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The first note played by low brass was not prepared (0:15). *Practice this entrance*. Have the air ready, and know what the note sounds like before you play it. Practice the articulation. Sizzle and slide/finger multiple times, then add the instrument to produce sound. The tone quality of the trumpets is okay, but the overall tone quality of this brass section is very spread (0:45). I would spend the majority of classroom time on fundamentals, focusing on flow studies and Remington exercises. The bassline needs more sensitivity in their playing (1:44). Play together as a unit and match the light, separated style of the melody by using controlled bursts of air. Same goes for (2:25) – do not blat notes, place them. Most of the low brass parts need to be lighter (2:44, 4:09). It sounds like they are relying less on producing quality tones, and more on volume. Quality of sound is always better than quantity of sound. Daily doses of flow studies and Remington exercises will help with that. Great control in sound during the recurring theme, trumpets at (5:39)! Use your ears when you have the theme in a call and response situation (3:17). Match the intonation of the instruments preceding you, and if your face is getting tired, you need to get firmer as you go to maintain articulations.



# D116 Middle School Band

## ≧Percussion≦

The suspended cymbal entrance has a very tinny sound to it (0:07); try placing closer to the bell/nipple. The bell part is doing an excellent job blending into the band (0:28)! The snare drum needs to stay *ahead* of the beat (0:51) – it sounds like it is playing catch up. I cannot tell if the snare drum is trying to play flams, or two notes very close together (0:58). Either way, make your sticking very clear. A flam should sound like a grace note to the beat. Additionally, the snare drum dynamic in that section does not need to be so loud. I would say that sixty percent of your current volume is all that is necessary to get your musical point across. At (1:37), the bass drum should be felt and not heard. The sound coming out of this bass drum does not have enough depth. I would suggest using a larger bass drum. I hear at (2:30) two crashes on crash cymbal. Use a fast flam crash cymbal technique, so we ultimately hear only one crash. Like the bass drum sound, the crash cymbals have a very thin sound as well. I would suggest using 18” thin crash cymbals for a more mature sound. Stay ahead of the beat, triangle at (3:20), and keep the beater closer to the triangle! At the end of the piece when percussion all play on beat one, all parts need to line up (5:16). Practice that in class and assess who is come in early, late, etc....

## ≧Overall≦

This band has a lot of potential, but fundamentals *must* be addressed. Most of the repeated offenses I am hearing can be remedied with Remington, long tones, and flow studies. For this group, I would dedicate two-thirds of class time to fundamentals and warm up. If your band is starting together, releasing together, balancing, and blending in their warm up, then that will transfer over into their music. I would make tuning a priority in rehearsals as well – intonation was one of the biggest problems I heard. Consider this: If you have a tuner in your band hall, make it a habit to have students get their instrument, warm up, and line up by the tuner. Or spend 4 minutes every day and tune a different section – Monday flutes and clarinets, Tuesdays saxophones and horns, Wednesday trumpets, etc....I would also consider investing in higher quality percussion equipment.

A band will never be exceptional without good fundamentals as their foundation. With that said, I would not try to challenge this band with harder music until their fundamentals are solid, and they’re producing characteristic tones. It is worthwhile to achieve a great quality of sound on easier music then to play with poor quality on challenging music. Fast and ugly is not musical – musical sensitivity and maturity is. Good luck!



# D117 High School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

In the introduction, reeds are way too loud with their entrances (0:14, 1:05, 3:57). Back off, and match the articulation, dynamic, and style of the instrument before you. A way to practice this in class can be with “F Around the Room” but with a melodic section (measure): Have one section play it, then go around the room and have every section come in after matching the same style, articulation, dynamic, and musicality. Saxophones continue to stick out far too much as the piece goes on (0:24). Great job flutes—of playing in tune and with a great sense of manual dexterity (0:53)! This goes for woodwinds and the entire band – the last note of the first piece should be attacked a little harder on the front (2:14). Have air at the *front* of the note, and experiment with different syllables like “Doh” or “Dah.” I am not hearing enough clarinets – play out (2:40, 3:20)! Keep a firm embouchure, blow more air into your horns, and let the reed vibrate! A lot of wrong notes and poor intonation in the saxophone section (2:54). These problems need to be addressed in sectionals. Flutes need to watch their intonation on high notes (4:07). Relax the embouchure, keep the bottom lip out, tune every note individually and mark adjustments in parts. Clarinets need a lot more air on their higher notes to stay in tune and to allow the sound to come out (4:26). Embouchure also needs to stay very firm.

## ≧Brass≦

The introduction sounds like the pyramid of sound has been flipped on its head (0:10)— balance *must* to be addressed! Build the first note from the lows up to the flutes, and practice the entrance with the pyramid in mind. Good intonation in the low brass (0:26). Baritones should not stick out—fit into the tuba sound (0:42). Use lighter articulation to match the woodwind melody (0:53, 1:06): little bursts of air from the abdomen. If the director can model this on a BERP, then on an instrument for brass, this might make the concept easier for musicians to understand. The quality of brass sound needs more depth (1:30). Use supported air constantly, and Remington exercises need to be practiced in rehearsal daily – specifically descending and ascending long tones. Start with descending first, making the lowest note the strongest note, then, when ascending, make the highest note the strongest note, and think about that note sounding like the low notes (depth). (1:57) is not together at all – this section needs to be isolated and rehearsed in a sectional. There are a lot of wrong notes that need be addressed as well (2:10). Watch intonation in the horns (2:22); tune every chord! Have the band hold the chord, have horns blend in one by one, then rehearse the entire section. They are also playing very pinched. The lips are likely too tense to vibrate, and the aperture is not big enough. Open the oral cavity, use a larger vowel shape (i.e. “oh”), and apply 20% less pressure.



# D117 High School Band

## ≧Percussion≦

Great, strong entrance, percussion (0:10)! It sounds like you have probably rehearsed from the beginning of this piece more times than anywhere else, because the entrances following the first, great one are not as stellar (0:28). Isolate and rehearse those entrances. The bass drum is too loud (1:16)—it should be felt and not heard; strike with 50% less force. The tambourine sound is great and controlled, but is too loud and is overpowering the melody (1:30). Fit *under* the winds! The crash cymbals are great in dynamic control and technique (1:55)—good job! Nice snare drum releases at (2:18), nice entrances and even crescendos at (3:30) as well. There is no percussion for a majority of the second piece, but the snare drum once again comes in with a very strong, confident entrance (5:06). Good job! All entrances from percussion are very even and clear (5:39). I would experiment going faster with this group – the tempo sounds like it is dragging too much. The snare drum is dragging more and more as the piece continues (6:47). The sticking pattern needs to remain constant and the snare drummer needs to keep eyes on the conductor.

## ≧Overall≦

Intonation is a serious issue with this band; it needs to be addressed *daily* and made a priority. Consider this: If you have a tuner in your band hall, make it a habit to have students get their instrument, warm up, and line up by the tuner. Or spend 4 minutes every day and tune a different section – Monday flutes and clarinets, Tuesdays saxophones and horns, Wednesday trumpets, etc....I would also consider investing in higher quality percussion equipment. If you allow musicians to play wildly out of tune, you are teaching them to hear wrong intervals. The percussion section is solid when it comes to manual dexterity and flexibility, rhythmic stability, tone quality, dynamics, and articulations, but they are too loud. They need to be told to back off much more! Everything is just too heavy. Musicians are huffing and puffing through their horns and are not playing stylistically or with maturity. Fundamentals must be addressed. Most of the repeated offenses I am hearing can be remedied with Remington, long tones, and flow studies. For this group, I would dedicate two-thirds of class time to fundamentals and warm up. If your band is starting together, releasing together, balancing, and blending in their warm up, that will transfer over into their music. This ensemble does not need to be challenged with higher grade literature. Rather, they need easier pieces where they can spend time working on tuning and fundamentals. An easier piece that is played with maturity, good technique, and good musicianship is much more impressive than a more challenging piece that is played with none. Good luck!



# D118 Middle School Band

## ≧Woodwinds≦

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I cannot tell if this was purposeful, but I hear no woodwinds in the beginning (0:33). When (I hear?) the flutes come in, their tone is very breathy (1:46). Daily long tones will help fix that. With such early beginners as I am hearing, you want to do long tones every day until the point when musicians are physically exhausted. That will guarantee to build up their chops and stamina to play long passages (more than one measure) with a strong quality of sound, because currently it sounds very huffy puffy (2:17). Great strong, supported sounds from the woodwind section at (2:25)! During the legato section, flutes need to have all notes touch (2:38). There should be no space or light between notes. There are a lot of wrong notes in the woodwinds at (2:56). This section needs to be broken down and practiced slowly. If you let beginners think they can get away with playing wrong notes, they are likely to try to get away with it for the rest of their band career! I am not quite sure what to make of (3:24). I hear a big hole in the music where the band either does not know their part, people got lost, or they're scared to play. There is not much you can do during a performance, but when you get back to the band hall, work on that section of the music. Break it down, layering parts, then put it into context and run through it a few times until the band feels comfortable with it.

## ≧Brass≦

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Excellent trumpet sounds in the beginning (0:07). Try making eighth notes shorter (0:12; 2:12). Practice rhythm on BERPs saying "dit," then transfer to full trumpet with written notes. Low brass sounds are strong but need to blend as a section and move together from note to note (0:21). Play out lows (1:18)—you cannot be heard, and the band sounds out of balance! When playing the melody trumpets, do not sit on each note (1:32). Rather, play *through* each note. Think of the line as legato. This might be a good section for the band director to model style and articulation. (2:11) sounds very low for trumpets. I would suggest either rewriting the melody and harmonizing with the clarinets (I think it would create some nice complexity in the piece!), or the trumpets need to make their low notes sound as strong as their higher notes on the page. The low brass need to practice long tones daily (2:27). They are pinching their sound to play in the higher register, and as a result, their intonation is suffering. This can all be addressed and fixed in Remington exercises, but it needs to be done daily. The trumpets do a great job blending with the woodwinds (3:15)—way to go! Great entrances trumpets – do not let your air die (5:01)! Play strong through the note all the way to the rest! Separate your notes more (6:27): try "doh" articulation.



# D118 Middle School Band

## ≧Percussion≦

Excellent entrance, snare drum (0:09), but then you seem to get off beat with the band at (0:30). With such a repetitive rhythm, keep your eyes glued to the conductor and, if you need to, count silently under your breath. Great confidence, battery (0:48)—you need to play with this level of control and confidence throughout the entire piece! The off beats from the snare drum sound like they are always on the verge of being *almost* late (1:17). Ghost hit the other hand that is not hitting the drum. I cannot feel the bass drum at (1:50); press with 10-20% more force into the head of the bass drum to make that happen. EXCELLENT snare drum entrance and roll at (2:04). Very controlled, even, and with good sense of articulation. I am wondering if that tinny sound I hear is a triangle at (2:42). If so, there are several variables to consider: be sure to be striking at the bottom of the triangle in the center of the bar. The string holding the triangle should not be too thick, as it can dampen the sound. The quality of the triangle could also be a factor. Every band should invest in a good triangle, otherwise, with a low quality one, you cannot hear the overtones. Always use high quality equipment and proper playing technique to get the overtones to come out. The bass drum is doing a great job matching the dynamic and style of the band (3:55). Always stay ahead of the beat and do not fall behind (4:52).

## ≧Overall≦

This band's strengths are very uneven. Like a weightlifter with one arm significantly stronger than the other, this band has sections that are significantly stronger than others, which can make it difficult to challenge all levels of abilities equally. Woodwinds need a lot of fundamental work. Their tone quality and sound production is not prepared to handle the level of difficulty in the music they are playing. They need lots of Remington studies and enharmonic long tones – until they get tired at the end of each class! Their technical skills are not fully developed either – scales will help with this. Give your band a scale every week to learn as a class. Set a speed they should play it at, build up to it, and have pass-offs at the end of the week. The brass are doing okay. Lows need more long tone work to develop more depth in their sound. Percussion are sounding quite excellent. Be sure to invest in high quality equipment, and take care that students are always playing with proper technique. This is a very hard-working band – you can hear their hearts in the music. To reflect what they are trying to convey fully, they need more fundamentals. Everything a band needs to work on always goes back to fundamentals! Good luck!





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