

## ABA COVID-19 STUDENT SAFETY AND MUSIC PROGRAM CONTINUATION IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

Document created by The School Bands Committee of the American Bandmasters Association and Endorsed by the Presidents/CEO's of The American Bandmasters Association, The John Philip Sousa Foundation, The American Band College

For a wide range of additional information and to pose questions please visit the ABA Online Forum at: <https://band-chat-2020.freeforums.net/>

Music is a fundamental element in the education of students worldwide. A student's ability to participate in ensemble music such as bands, orchestras and choirs is a unique and irreplaceable element of student access in not only learning about, but sharing in, the art of music making. The future of this type opportunity must be of paramount concern to teachers and administrators, though the health and safety of these music students and their teachers must also be at the front of our decision making. To the dual effort of keeping everyone safe and preserving quality music education for all, we offer these ideas for consideration while planning *temporary* scheduling and health considerations in situations where adjustments become necessary. It is obviously our goal to retain as much student enthusiasm and educational rigor as possible so that all may return to the proper delivery of these important classes, healthy and musically prepared when it becomes possible. It is crucial that teachers and administrators carefully evaluate all decisions in navigating these uncharted waters so that adjustments do not produce unintended long-term consequences. Whatever accommodations become necessary during this difficult time, it must remain the goal to return to full ensembles in regularly scheduled classes when health and safety permit. The unique value of ensemble music making is well documented and necessary to our students and to our society. This document is based on the belief that our present focus should not be on the "what" but the "how." The COVID-19 pandemic forces us to re-think "how" we will deliver quality music instruction through the American band program. We must not rush to permanent solutions to *temporary* problems. What is good for students is always the focus. Our effort is to preserve music ensembles for the future so that we can continue to serve students through music.

**The science of protecting people during this pandemic and the opinions of medical professionals are still evolving. All items below are ideas for consideration. Any accommodations should be made with careful consideration of the best science currently available and reviewed regularly for possible revision based on that science. Several research projects are currently in progress studying every aspect of aerosol projection of particles while playing and singing, surface retention of contaminants, disinfecting instruments and surfaces, and the control of projected air, which will provide more information, very soon. Every teacher and administrator must be vigilant in their efforts to apply the latest research and reevaluate all procedures as the science evolves.**

# ***Accumulated List of Possible Accommodations***

## ***Part 1: For All Classrooms***

- In a time when students have given up so much, the ensemble experiences will be, as it always has been, the reason many students will continue to study music. Preserving these opportunities for current and future students will be very important in fostering the creativity, social responsibility and humanity that are necessary to return to normal. The value of ensemble music making in teaching music and other educational goals is impossible to replace and, therefore, needs to be carefully protected.
- Music teachers should be meeting with administrators NOW to start planning program continuation contingencies and provide access to the vast amount of material becoming available to help with this planning. Ensuring focused, well planned music education experiences must be the goal of all educators regardless of what temporary accommodations must be made.
- Assume that school start and end dates as well as class schedules will change and that whatever the opening strategies, it is possible that those will also change. Be prepared with ideas to accommodate necessary adjustments so that the “how” we deliver instruction can change while still maintaining sound educational goals and expectations.
- The science of protecting people during this pandemic is still evolving. All items below are ideas for consideration. Any accommodations should be made with careful consideration of the best science currently available and reviewed regularly for possible revision based on that science. Several research projects are currently in progress studying every aspect of aerosol projection of particles while playing and singing, surface retention of contaminants, disinfecting instruments and surfaces, and the control of projected air, which will provide more information, very soon.
- Use of portable air scrubbers (hepafilter filtration system for large square footage)
- Percussionists must use personal or assigned mallets and sticks. No sharing. Fresh gloves should be used when percussionists use shared equipment: bass drum, gong, chime mallets, etc. All must be cleaned after each use.

- Possible removal of carpeting and regular mopping of tiles with an alcohol-based solution, or regular disinfectant spray of any carpeted areas are necessities.
- Provide central “condensation” dump sites (into a buckets of an alcohol solution) or individual personal sterilization materials are necessary for brass players for water disposal.
- Explore intermittent outdoor rehearsal possibilities.
- “No instrument sharing” is an important goal. In situations where not enough instruments exist to accomplish this, serious consideration must be given to how to safely serve all of the students. ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM INVESTMENT, “INSTRUMENTS IN THE ATTIC” COMMUNITY DONATION PROGRAMS, BETWEEN-  
     SCHOOL LOANING, MUSIC STORE LOANS, ETC., NEED TO BE  
     PURSUED SO THAT STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS WITHOUT PROPER  
     EQUIPMENT ARE NOT UNFAIRLY PENALIZED.
- Any cleaning/sterilization of school owned wind instruments should be done by adults, not students.
- The use of bell covers, room dividers can be explored to limit air flow, but these are still being researched.
- The use of fans to move air up if the ceiling is high enough
- Use of gloves when it does not inhibit the student’s ability to play the instrument is still being debated. If used, gloves should be fresh for each class. Regular hand washin or the use of hand sanitizer is a very important expectation.
- Masks should be worn during non-playing times. Consider purchase or making of zippered masks as demonstrated on Czech Philharmonic video of the horn section (percussion, strings and vocalists can wear a mask all of the time, though singers may require even more distancing due to the manner in which singers project air.)
- Seating should be based on social distancing guidelines
- Use sanitizer on mouthpieces as needed.
- Don’t touch your face.
- Mallet and other percussion instruments cleaned after each use or used with fresh gloves - research and be careful when cleaning rosewood and such, instruments.
- Create one-way traffic patterns for entry and exit of rehearsal rooms. If there is only one door, make it one way before class, and the opposite after class. NO

opposite directions.

- Limit student access and student numbers in all storage spaces. Create one-way traffic in *all* student access spaces.
- Expect to allow more time for entry, exit and cleaning. This will result in less actual playing time in each rehearsal.
- Students should not share sets of music. Music should be sent and accessed electronically, when possible.
- Shared items: chairs, stands, etc. must be sanitized regularly.
- Hand sanitizer, antiseptic wipes and extra face coverings need to be available for student use.
- Staff must demonstrate and model appropriate safety precautions at all times. This includes wearing masks, hand cleaning, and distancing.
- **Again, all accommodations should be constantly reviewed and altered based on the best science available as this situation evolves.**

### ***Part 2: Some Classrooms May Require Minor Or No Scheduling Adjustments***

- Smaller ensemble classes housed in large rehearsal rooms may have adequate space for proper social distancing as whole units
- Regardless, all of the precautions for part one still apply.

### ***Part 3: Scheduling possibilities for Ensembles Too large To Meet Social Distancing Guidelines In Currently Assigned Spaces***

- Look at fall and spring semesters separately. Plan for the possibility that second semester will be a reschedule and back to normal with medical expert approval. Regardless of the amount of time our current health crisis requires us to use alternative instruction methods, a return to traditional ensemble instruction when health considerations allow, must always be in our planning.
- Consider the use of a portion of ILT/planning and lunch time to open additional slots for teaching.
- Split large ensembles into Woodwind and Brass/Percussion sections, meeting separately.
- If ensembles are rehearsing as separate groups, *after* parts are learned, use Woodwind class recordings for Brass to learn context and the reverse to help students experience a finished work. (Online recordings can be used in the same manner...*not* to teach parts, but for context.)

- Split large ensembles into two smaller ensembles meeting during the day.
- Use online resources to add students who, due to health concerns, have chosen to not yet be in on-campus classes. (This should not be seen as a long-term possibility, since being a true part of an ensemble and gaining all the benefits of such, requires active participation and commitment. These are possibilities for extreme and unprecedented circumstances.)
- Use online resources for extra help, along with sectionals and private lessons.
- When there are multiple teachers and available rooms, classes could be split into smaller sections.
- Splitting large ensembles into smaller groups requires consideration of how best to use the staff as well as available space. Teachers can and will work very hard to maintain their programs, but, the hours they can be expected to work must be taken into consideration. Early-bird and late-day sessions offer options, if teacher use is carefully considered.
  - Using large rooms to house multiple chamber ensembles could be possible with proper distancing. This is not ideal, sound-wise, but possible in some situations. This requires tremendous planning on the part of the teacher to account for acoustical challenges.
  - Small chamber ensembles are valuable and can be used as central to the curriculum and as variety from the tedium of this *temporary* approach to ensemble music making.
  - The use of room dividers to separate/distance smaller ensembles in large rooms.
  - Alternate-day scheduling may be used to reduce large class size. In some situations, alternate-day scheduling may include Group A rehearsing in larger rehearsal rooms on *odd* days and doing listening, style study, analytical and other non-playing assignments in a different space on *even* days, while Group B does the opposite.
  - If schools adopt staggered opening/closing times for different grades, thus limiting total instruction time, cross-grade options should be explored to allow ensemble members to meet together.
  - Use auditorium space for performance ensembles (stage and/or seats.)
  - In some buildings, large hallways can be used for small ensemble rehearsals.
  - Some smaller “specialty” classes may need to be suspended in the short-term, in order for the staff to manage rescheduled basic instruction such as large ensembles that have been split into

multiple classes.

- Expand the use of listening projects that can include responses and musical evaluation components.
- Use resources such as the Marine Band online Sousa library and music supply company online recording data bases to allow students to access and play their individual parts with a full ensemble.
  
- RECRUITING BEGINNERS AND RECONNECTING WITH YOUNGER STUDENTS IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO AVOID A 6 - 8 YEAR DEVESTATING LOSS TO PROGRAM CONTINUITY. MANY PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON IDEAS FOR RECRUITING AND STARTING BEGINNERS, REMOTELY, USING TEACHER GENERATED VIDEO AND ONLINE OPTIONS. RECRUITING, INSTRUMENT SELECTION WITH CLEAR EXPLAINATIONS AND ACTUALLY STARTING STUDENTS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH CAREFUL PLANNING. VISIT THE ABA FORUM REFERENCED IN THIS DOCUMENT FOR IDEAS CONCERNING THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT.
- Younger grades, especially elementary classes should consider like-instrument classes to create smaller numbers.
- To simplify instruction, some may consider starting only basic instruments: Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, Trombone. If instruction must be on line smaller like instrument classes may be a good way to approach teaching young students.
- At lower grade levels, pulling students from one or two individual teachers at a time, is possible. If band, orchestra, and general music meet simultaneously, accessing students this way could give the individual classroom teacher a planning break.
- As large recruiting gatherings may not be possible (although this approach works, well), create a video of the teacher demonstrating each instrument for use in individual classrooms for recruiting purposes. This video can also be used to recruit students in the case that “in-person” school does not open in the fall.
- If school is not open “in-person”, it is possible to follow up the recruiting video by securing student contact information from the school and doing online student instrument evaluations by asking the student to sing back pitches, identify high and low pitches, imitate clapped rhythms, match the teacher’s modeling of brass mouthpiece, buzzing high and low pitches, use a finger to demonstrate the clarinet or flute embouchure formation – including teeth placement, chin, etc. - proper tongue placement and other details of preparing to make an initial sound.
- Testing, auditions, and other individual playing requirements can be conducted by video, using Zoom, or such, if “in-person” is not possible. While the grade is hardly the reason we enjoy ensemble music-making, clear guidelines, well defined learning goals and established evaluation techniques are even more crucial in a time when traditional participation is not possible. Find ways to enjoy the process and keep students engaged so that we can return to normal class activities as better musicians ready to perform.
- It is possible to present a performance of small ensembles and a combined larger group ensemble, online, using technology to combine smaller groups, rehearsing separately. Regardless of the accommodations that must be made, in order to have class during the school day, a community presentation is crucial. A holiday spectacular or other such online presentation including every possible student and group, maybe even the art department, theater department and the

technology classes, could be a huge boost to music, the school, and the community. While all technologies may not be available at every school, creativity, here, could be very helpful to the music program and the community.

## **Suggestions For Viable Teaching Scenarios During The COVID-19 Pandemic And Subsequent Educational System Restructuring**

### **Scheduling Scenario 1 - Full School Day with Social Distancing Practices**

Divide the concert band into instrumental families with each family meeting in a different class period. For example, the brass would meet in Period 1, woodwinds in Period 2, percussion in Period 3, etc. The instruction through instrumental family groups includes full band literature (in section rehearsals) as well as various chamber settings to provide a full ensemble experience to each student. At the point our distancing guidelines are relaxed, add (after school) full-band rehearsals. Adjust the class meetings back to full band(s) in the subsequent semester.

### **Scheduling Scenario 2 - A/B School Day Designed to Reduce School Density**

Should the school system employ an A/B education schedule with either alternate days or two teaching sessions per day (Session A meets 8 - Noon, Session B meets 1 - 5), please note the following suggested scenarios:

- Divide the band into instrumental families. Work with the guidance counselors to ensure students are scheduled in the appropriate A or B Session based upon their particular instruments. The instruction through instrumental family groups should include full band literature (in section rehearsals) as well as various chamber settings to provide a full-ensemble experience to each student. At the point that our distancing guidelines are relaxed, add (after school) full band rehearsals. Adjust the class meetings back to full band(s) in the subsequent semester.
- Divide the band into multiple smaller full band ensembles with a band class meeting in the A (8 - 12) Session as well as the B (1 - 5) Session. At the point that our distancing guidelines are relaxed, add (after school) full band rehearsals. Adjust the class meetings back to full band(s) in the subsequent semester.
- Divide the band into multiple smaller full ensembles (A/B/C, etc.) Deliver instruction to one group, "in person", while the other group attends via videoconference. Alternate the groups in the next meeting, insuring that each student receives face-to-face instruction for a minimum of 2 times per week.

### **Scheduling Scenario 3 - Blended Music Instruction Including a Combination of In-Person Meetings and Internet-Based Videoconference Participation**

- As facilities allow, schedule a band rehearsal each day. Divide the band into smaller full ensembles with a different group meeting “live” each day, based on facility size and capacity. The remaining students would attend the rehearsal via videoconference to hear/experience all ensemble instruction. The “virtual” students would perform along with the “live” ensemble, in their own homes, with their microphones muted. This allows the student to hear the “live” ensemble in a semblance of musical balance and blend as well as the music instruction and feedback from the podium. It is suggested that a quality camera and microphone be in place in the classroom, allowing all online students to see and hear the conductor/teacher, clearly.
- Based on available teaching resources, schedule online masterclasses and small group lessons via a videoconferencing system.

### **Scheduling Scenario 4 –If Classroom Space Requires Multiple Groups to Trade Room Use (Band - Week One, Choir - Week Two, Etc.) Or If No Other Possibility for In-School Music Instruction or Band During the COVID-19 Impacted Semesters Is Possible (Last Resort)**

- Create video modules featuring teacher instruction including lectures, demonstrations and directed listening experiences for students to experience a minimum of one time per week while they are playing at home, preparing assignments for recorded submission.
- Create formative assessment assignments for student submission featuring individual performances of selected band literature as well as solos and pedagogical materials (etudes, technique exercises, etc.)
- Select a concert theme (i.e. Winter Concerts/Holidays). Direct students to record video performances of thematic solo literature and small ensembles (duets/trios/quartets). After formal review and student revision, edit the final video performances into a concert broadcast to be streamed on local media networks as well as internet platforms such as YouTube.
- Create a series of directed listening assignments based on quality recordings of band literature easily accessible through our military and university bands. Create worksheets for each assigned composition with questions focused on ensemble concepts and skills.
- Create peer mentorship settings pairing those students with advanced experience and younger musicians. Assign each peer team a recording project to be submitted by video featuring a duet performance for presentation to the full band. Consider creating guidelines for students to select their own literature for the video performance.
- Direct the students to program their own band concert. In addition to the selection of literature, the student will select a quality video performance of each work. Each student will submit a playlist based on videos of quality band performances available online via YouTube or



other platforms. As an extension, direct the students to create their own concert program including notes on the composition and the performing ensemble.

#### ***Part 4: Finances***

- Schools must provide all needed supplies such as antiseptic wipes, hand sanitizer, masks, disinfectants.) Neither individual teachers nor music budgets can absorb the cost of these needs.
- Music budgets must stretch to pay for music, recordings, and other materials appropriate for whatever classroom accommodations are made – chamber groups, split ensembles, study guides, etc.
- If changes in marching band activities occur, teachers should consider that funds usually spent on staff, drill, flags, and props could be reallocated to online specialists or future concert camp possibilities.
- Consider redirecting resources to commission or create consortiums to commission quality music compositions designed for indeterminate instrumentation for use during times when full ensembles are difficult. Encouraging composers to add works to those already being planned, can be significant.
- Online or in-classroom guest specialists can add variety and value to the students' experiences.

#### ***Part 5: Marching Band and Other Outdoor Activities***

- Some classes could possibly rehearse outside for on occasion to avoid the conflicting sounds when rehearsing multiple small ensembles in one room
- While marching band is an important part of the community outreach of band programs and can be a valuable asset as we attempt to return to normal, participation requires careful student safety planning. This is largely an outside activity and can possibly be designed for minimal distancing concerns in some situations.
- Tight formations such as parade blocks are not conducive to social distancing. Water breaks, students gathering at beginning and ending times and entrance and exit from buildings need to be carefully considered.

- Large numbers of students in the stands, shoulder to shoulder for extended periods of time, and tight drill formations defy distancing considerations. (Maybe alternate the use of students, week to week, in the stands for games.)
- As marching band students move and exercise more and work to rebuild lung capacity during early practices more coughing is often a result. Extra care in spacing is necessary to help avoid community spread due to the force of both exhaling and coughing during these rehearsals.
- Teachers and administrators must consider the added cost of extra busses needed for distancing if this type travel is allowed.
- If school starts, minus football and marching band, *everyone* should have at least one show: music, formation, etc., that can be learned quickly – in one week – ready to go, in case at some time, football is reinstated. We must be safe, but involvement here in a safe manner is very important to our community contribution and support. It should be fun for students and entertaining for the audience, and could possibly involve other school groups and the audience. Some are working on making such things available, but be prepared, regardless.
- If fall camps and events are not possible, consider the reallocation of funds for camp, new flags, props and performance plans to possible spring concert camps with specialists, spring concert performances or competitive activities and other intriguing opportunities.
- Seek help through the online resources being created to provide ideas concerning teaching marching, movement, color guard and other related skills remotely.

Please visit the American Bandmasters Forum at: <http://band-chat-2020.freeforums.net/> for more information from many sources and the opportunity to ask questions of others dealing with these issues. Challenging times make us remember just how important music is to our students and to our society. We have weathered many difficult times and must now deal with this. Just like in rehearsal, our focus must be on what we can and will do, not on the difficulty of doing it. Teachers need to smile, be positive, and do what is good for students!