

Keeping Your Students Engaged at the End of the Year

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Rehearsal Motivation and Games

The Jar of Doom - Place student's names in a jar, make a 10-12 sided die with objectives you are working on. This could be scales, exercises, counting lines, etc. Draw a name and roll the die. Student performs whatever is chosen.

Performance Day - Allow students to perform any song (any difficulty level) they want for the class. It can be 20 seconds or 2 minutes depending on age and size of the class. You can allow students to practice/perform in small groups first if you like. No grade, no critique, just perform for the enjoyment of music. Have them stand and introduce themselves before performing. Good practice for solo contest!

Bring a Parent to Music Class Day - Invite parents to attend your class for a day. Students will be motivated to prepare exercises well for this demonstration and will want to showcase their best behavior. Parents will love seeing a "behind the scenes" normal day of music. Invite administrators, counselors, and other teachers as well.

Would You Rather - Throughout your regular rehearsal change things up by dividing students into 2 groups by using the "Would You Rather?" game. Have them perform a scale or exercise based on their answer to questions like "Would you rather be in a pool of marshmallows or a pool of M&Ms?" Would you rather have blue hair or blue feet?"

Drop Out - Similar to a "Last Man/Woman Standing" contest. If you are working on something that the students know well but are making careless errors have a "Drop Out Contest." If they make a mistake they drop out (or even better, sit down but still keep participating). You can just play once or you can keep playing, increasing tempo until you eliminate all but one student.

Jeopardy - This can be any game show - Wheel of Fortune, Who wants to Be a Millionaire, America's Got Talent, etc. Make up a super simple version that can be used in music classes. Divide the class into two teams and award points in a similar style as the game show. (Take away points if a team is not staying engaged.)

Beat the Director - Ideal for teachers who play many instruments, try to beat the students in a contest where you play an instrument you are wanting to improve on. If your main instrument is flute, beat the kids on trumpet; if your main instrument is violin, beat them on bass. Pick something hard enough that you don't always win!

Learning activities after instruments are turned in

Measure Mix-Up (Aural Listening Skills) - Print out a melody that is familiar to the students and cut it up into 1 measure pieces. Have the students reassemble the music using no instrument/voice - only their inner hearing. Then allow them to play/sing it to check their work.

Envelope Games (Rhythmic/Melodic Identification) - Give students 8-10 cards in an envelope. Each of the 8-10 cards have slightly different rhythms or melodies on them, but each envelope is identical. Have students lay out their cards on their stand. Play or sing one card. Have students choose the correct card. Continue until all cards have been chosen. You can also sing/play one wrong to try to "trick" them.

Rhythmic Dictation - Give students a blank piece of paper. Have them write out 8 beat lines. You clap or play a rhythm, they write it down. The more beats you do at once, the more difficult. You can start with just one beat at a time if they've never done it before. Also, uneven rhythms are tougher than even. So a dotted quarter/eighth is tougher than a quarter and then 2 eighths. Adjust difficulty based on ability.

Rhythmic Exploration - Teach students rhythms that you didn't get to this year. Maybe sixteenth notes, 6/8 time or even 5/8 or 7/8 time. Come up with really tricky rhythms that make them think. Let them write them and 'dissect' the beats/rhythms to truly understand them. Consider allowing them to work in buddies or small groups.

Chants/Theory - You can teach them the lines/spaces chant or the Key Signature chant. If you have never taught them the order of flats/sharps or the circle of fifths, now's your chance. Check out MusicTheory.net and have some timed competitions.

Instrument/Equipment Care - Talk about (and possibly perform) instrument maintenance and care before instruments are stored or sent home for the summer. See articles on BDTs by N-Tune Music that have specific care and storage process.

YouTube with a Purpose - Show clips about the value of music education or videos of amazing musicians performing. Links from BandDirectorsTalkShop.com are under Music Advocacy, Substitute Lesson Plans, Famous Instrumental Artists & YouTube Finds.

Planning for Summer & Upcoming Year - Talk to Students about the importance of practicing and continuing their musical education over the summer. Encourage them to go to summer concerts, camps etc. Go over the calendar for when school starts back and start getting them excited about the next year.

Heart to Heart - Tell the kids how much you love music, how much you love teaching and how you have such a great job. Explain how being a musician is a lifelong honor and you are so glad they have chosen to be a musician. Share motivational stories with them to send them off on a good note. (Many articles on BDTs for this.)

Retention strategies to keep kids 'in' over the summer

- Hold an end of year celebration/banquet
- Update contact info for students & parents
- Promote summer lessons
- Promote summer camps (and attend yourself if possible)
- Announce your spring trip for the following year
- Touch base with parents - be sure they are aware of offerings for the summer
- Assign band buddies for the following year - have the older students check in with the younger students over the summer
- Schedule "shindigs" with vertical alignment so middle school kids can set foot on the high school campus and meet high school students.
- Send out a summer newsletter/ mailing
- Have section leaders arrange their own summer activities with their section
- Hold a Student Leadership retreat
- Mail out September music early so students can start practicing and getting excited
- Have a "Registration Day" before school starts

Books & social media

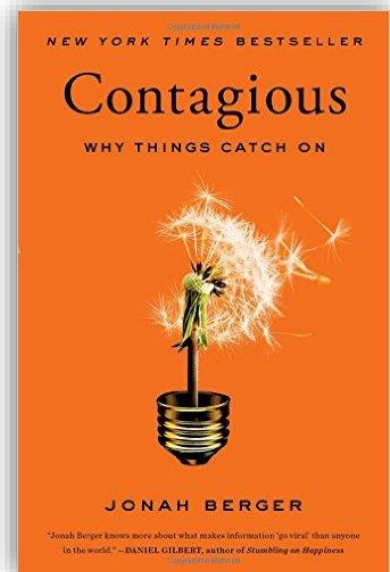
Contagious: Why things catch on by Jonah Berger is a great summer read for music directors!

- Read Band Directors Talk Shop's blog article ['Contagious Engagement in Band'](#) for more information

Summer is a great time to keep **social media** going and keep kids excited.

Top Tip: You can preschedule posts so you don't have to think about it over break.

This is great for retention as well as future recruitment.



Other activities

Recognition of Students

Give certificates and awards that really mean something to your program. If you don't have a tradition of awards, recognize students with awards that go along with familiar character traits. "Little Engine That Could Award" the "Tortoise and the Hare Award" the "Reach Higher Award" the "Puzzle Piece Award." Many of these have stories that go along with them on BDTS - Search Little Engine that Could .

Have students pass off objectives to receive awards at the final concert. By allowing all students a chance to earn the award, there is no "favoritism." Do the work, get the recognition.

Staff Recognition

Write thank you notes! Think of as many people as possible that have helped you this year or supported your program and students. Hand write a thank you note and mail it to them. This might include administrators, teachers, parents, mentors, and more. Make it your goal to write one or two thank you notes every day from now until the last day of school. As rare as personal thank you notes are nowadays, they are sure to be appreciated and remembered.

Student/Program Evaluation

Consider tracking students performance in a detailed, objective manner at the end of each year (or semester). Use a "percentage evaluation chart" to record what percentage of your students are meeting expectations. You can evaluate goals such as posture, foot tap, specific rhythms, exact ranges, individual scales, and articulation. You can evaluate practice techniques, participation, work ethic and behavior. BDTS has a sample 6 page evaluation form that can download and use as a guide. Program goals on this form includes retention, private lessons, students with step-up instruments, administrative support, parental support, campus support, and community support. This evaluation will not only help you see where you are now, but will give you ideas of how to improve next year.

Audition music for next year's ensemble is a great motivator at the end of the year. Be sure you select quality "teaching" music for students to work on. Consider a 2-minute scale element where students play as many scales as they can in 2-minutes.

Instrument Evaluation and Repair

Schedule your overhauls. BDTS highly recommends N-Tune Music & Sound. They are well worth any shipping charges you might have. One of BDTS's partners, they are directly responsible for the free information in this handout and on BandDirectorsTalkShop.com.

Teacher Evaluation

When submitting your paperwork for your personal teacher evaluation, be sure you include "unconventional" professional development. For example, list 10 articles you read on BDTS, give a 2 sentence "take away" and an example of how you implemented that idea in your class.

Consider professional development opportunities for the summer. Attend conferences, read books, find a mentor, reflect on strengths/weaknesses and set new goals.

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