

Reaching Resistant Learners in the General Music Classroom
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General Practices:

- **Put an emphasis on rhythm.**
 - Rhythm sticks, world drumming (see ThisWorldMusic.com)
 - Turn speech into rhythm
- **Create infectious ostinati**
 - Think in eight-beat groups, put a heavy emphasis on one, then back off
 - Let the time play itself, then “peck” at it
 - Equate it to speech and “don’t talk too much”
 - Avoid ending ostinati with unresolved eighth notes
- **Relate to athletics**
 - Breathing exercises
 - Singing exercises
 - Eye training exercises
- **Steps to singing**
 - Speech to rhythm
 - Rhythm to humming
 - Humming to “open-mouth” humming
 - Humming to singing

Gendered Issues for Boys:

- **“Boys don’t sing” “Boys don’t do music”:**
 - Use work songs, military songs (see “repertoire considerations” below)
 - Use peer models
 - Use humor

Gendered Issues for Girls:

- **Friendship Issues**
 - “You don’t have to like each other, but you do have to respect each other”
 - Grouping rules (1 plus grade level number maximum)

Repertoire Considerations:

- **Work Songs**
 - Erie canal
 - Drill ye Terriers
 - Old Alabama
- **Military Songs and Chants**
 - “Oh Soldier, Where Have You Been?”
 - “One, two, three four”
 - “Elvis”
- **Satirizing Songs**
 - “My Gal’s a Corker”

Some Thoughts on Classroom Management
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Hello fellow Wyoming Music Educators,

Please enjoy these tips on classroom management, but please do not share them with anybody quite yet. I am submitting these in an article to a practitioner journal. Hopefully pretty soon they will be available to everybody there. Thanks, I appreciate it! –Tiger

1. **Prevention is best.** Half the battle of classroom management is preventing problems before they start. To do that, you must reward good behavior whenever you can, especially the students who can go either way. Praise the slightest thing and get them used/addicted to the feeling of being in your good graces (e.g., “I like the way Rachel is standing with her toes on the black line”). Think of them as bank accounts and praise as your currency. If you see a low balance, make a praise deposit. You can praise before, after, or during good deeds.
2. **Design realistic group work.** Generally speaking, students can only handle being in groups that are as big as one plus their grade level. For example, second grade students should not usually be in groups bigger than 3 for very long (1 + 2nd grade). There are exceptions, but this rule helps eliminate unnecessary rowdiness.
3. **Visualize the ideal situation.** This is more of a mindset, but it will help you streamline your management. Just as you would want to have a clear aural image of a choral piece before you step onto a podium, you should have a clear idea of what you want to be happening in your class before you teach. Then, eliminate anything that obstructs that vision. For example, when you plan a passing game, visualize students passing the object on time, being kind towards each other, etc. If an issue comes up, such as a student holding on to the object for too long, you can correct him and her and easily explain why you will not allow that behavior (e.g., it will keep the next student from getting a turn).
4. **Learn names.** You can stop a student from a hundred yards away if you know his or her name. Conversely, in my experience, there is nothing more pleasant to a child than his or her name. I do not believe in using a student’s name with a snide tone, no matter what the situation.
5. **Use proximity.** You might be surprised how many problems you can prevent by moving around the room. Generally, student who are farthest away from the teacher think they can get away with more. You want to eliminate that sense of distance.
6. **Use a mouth sound to quiet the class.** Make your cue to quiet the class something that the students have to do with their mouth such as a series of percussive “chhhh” sounds. That way, it will be physically impossible for the students to do what they are supposed to do and talk at the same time. Remind them of this fact as necessary. Other clever ideas include humming an A=440, or speaking a familiar chant.
7. **Ask students to switch places.** This is another piece of prevention or early intervention. You do not have to provide a rationale for doing this task, chances are good that the students involved already know. If they ask you why you are doing this, answer with, “Why do you think?” If they say they do not know, reply with, “You’ll be able to make better choices over here.”

8. **Make it very clear what is OK and what is not OK, and do it before they have a chance to misbehave.** With younger students, I find it effective to act out what is OK, act out what is not OK, and then ask them why. Explain and demonstrate what you want to happen. For example, when passing out materials, model what you should do (or have a student model it while you narrate the directions), then satirize what you should not do (e.g., start playing right away), then ask why one shouldn't do it that way (e.g., it will be too loud with everyone playing at once).
9. **Make positive phone calls home.** This was one of my favorite parts about teaching. I would use part of my morning prep time (more likely to reach voicemail that way) to make a positive phone call home. I targeted students who I perceived could really use a boost that day. After that, parents and families were ready to help me in anyway they could, including talking to their child if they I had to make the other kind of call home.
10. **Put the burden on burden creators.** If a student is acting out egregiously, one strategy is to set that student aside and ask, "Can *you* tell *me* why I should let you back in after doing something like that?" This is subtle, but it makes the student think about his or her behavior. When he or she cannot answer this question, ask, "Then how are you going to fix it and do better?" If he or she comes up with a good plan, let him or her back in. If not, you can offer suggestions such as copying the behavior of one of their peers, but I am fond of letting students figure this out for themselves.
11. **Keep your intentions pure.** Whenever you are frustrated with a particular student, remind yourself that you are paid to help that child. Try to come from a place of helpfulness and service. For example, when you must call home because of a student's poor behavior, state what happened and then ask, "What do you think is the best way for me to help your child?" This is more than a slick way to make a potentially unpleasant phone call better, it should be characteristic of your mindset as an educator. In many ways, similar to the clergy, educators live a life of service.
12. **Whenever possible, speak in terms of safety.** Safety is probably the most concrete and most reinforced management aspect in a student's life. You can tap into that existing knowledge by putting your learning tasks into terms of safety. For example, if you notice students sitting on the ground during a movement activity when they should be standing up, explain to him or her that, "It's not safe to be sitting on the ground, I don't want you to get hurt." This is also a reinforcement of keeping your intentions pure and visualizing the ideal situation.
13. **Do not fear the parents of the unruly child.** A common fear among young teachers is that one will damage a student's well-being or love of music if you correct his or her behavior, or that a phone call from that student's parents will end a career. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, concern yourself with the parents of the conscientious student who is getting less of a music education because of the unruly child. For example, do not fear the parents of the student who fooled around during a movement activity and knocked down a classmate. If anything, concern yourself with the parents of the classmate who was knocked down. You want to be able to tell them that you took steps to make sure something like that did not happen again.
14. **Stop an activity and ask questions.** Instead of saying, "don't do that" after a student misbehaves during an activity, try stopping the activity and asking, "Why did we have to stop?" Call on a student to answer this question, then ask the misbehaving student if he or she heard the answer to the question. That way, he or she will get the reinforcement

from their peers and the teacher. Be consistent. “Wear them out, don’t let them wear you out” as one of my teachers would say. You might notice that well-behaving students will ask the misbehaving student to stop. As long as they are polite, I usually encourage this. However, if become nasty with each other, a better use of your time than playing the game is sitting the class down and reminding them about how we are supposed to treat each other.