

Bigger and Better:
Improving quality in the growing string class
2008 CASTA Summer Conference—Denver, CO

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I. Recruiting: More string players is a good thing!

a. Pre-recruiting/Attitude Development

- i. Begin targeting students two years before they must make a choice
- ii. Be a resource rather than a nuisance—offer your services
- iii. Develop a lesson plan integrating music with general studies
- iv. Give informal elementary classroom concerts with holiday or seasonal themes
- v. Have formal concerts featuring alumni from that school playing in a large ensemble
- vi. Always involve the classroom students in some way (holds interest and expends energy in a directed means)

b. Recruiting Demonstration

- i. Sell YOURSELF with personality and enthusiasm
- ii. DEMONSTRATE
- iii. Prioritize the presentation order of instruments (feature the viola or cello)
- iv. Interest survey (who wants to play)
- v. Aptitude test (?)
- vi. Classroom teacher's recommendation
- vii. General music teacher's recommendation
- viii. Contact parents (letter, phone call, e-mail, or all three)
- ix. In person meeting with parents and students
 1. Schedule
 2. Costs
 3. Getting an instrument (and correct sizing)
 4. Workload/Practice
- x. Most students will join as a result of this presentation

c. Post-recruiting/Motivation

- i. Administration
 1. Get scheduling information to counselors early
 2. Anticipate problems AND prepare solutions
 3. Aim for a positive exchange with administrators
 4. Focus on the students and not "your" program
- ii. Students
 1. Provide opportunities for younger students to socialize with older students (middle or high school coaches or tutors, combined concert performances, etc.)
 2. Have an Orchestra Day for all ages (learning and fun)
 3. Achievement awards
 4. Bulletin boards that recognize and feature students or sections

- 5. Trips (festivals, school tours, “forced fun”)
- iii. Community
 - 1. Awareness
 - 2. Support
- d. Re-recruiting (students of all ages)**
 - i. Any students in any grade
 - ii. High School ESOL beginning string class
 - iii. Adult beginners (especially seniors)

II. Elementary: Set up “by the numbers”

- a. Set up is everything
- b. Preliminaries (w/reference points)
- c. Instrument Hold
- d. Pizzicato Position
- e. Left Hand Foundation
- f. Right Hand Foundation

III. Middle School: Teach the instrument *with* an instrument

- a. Fewer words, faster pace (The more you talk, the less they listen)
- b. Prioritize skills, not pieces of music
- c. Variables of Sound: Placement, Weight, Speed
- d. Shifting & Vibrato *en masse*

IV. High School: Old enough to vote with their feet

- a. Teaching the instrument never stops (even with a podium and baton)
- b. Right Hand Finger Flexibility
- c. Collé to Spiccáto
- d. Scales to three octaves
- e. Artistic vibrato

V. Orchestra CEO

- a. Handbook
- b. Parental Involvement⇒Advocacy (direct relationship)
- c. Booster Budget

VI. Tuning Strategies

- a. Pre-tune school basses and cellos
- b. Softly broadcast an A as students enter; Bassists have electronic tuners
- c. Teacher always helps (especially w/pegs)
- d. From basses, add cellos, add violas, add violins (simulated double stops)
- e. Upper strings bowed *pianissimo* at tip
- f. Double stops and bass/cello harmonics