



New Teacher Handbook

September 2023



Missouri Music Educators Association

A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

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The mission of the Missouri Music Educators Association, a federated association of the National Association for Music Education clearly focuses on effectively serving the membership in their goals of teaching and learning, by promoting a comprehensive music education program that furthers music making by all and supports the advancement of music education as a profession. MMEA is governed by the executive board and board of directors. In addition, the state is divided geographically into eleven districts which are governed by their individual boards.

FROM THE TIME YOU ARE HIRED

- Set up a meeting (or multiple meetings) with the principal to discuss expectations.
 - Create a list of questions to ask. (click [here](#) for a sample list)
- If the previous teacher left under amicable circumstances consider meeting with them to ask questions.
- Determine your school's MMEA district. You will need this information to participate in festivals and auditions.
 - Your MMEA district is NOT the same as your MSHSAA district.
 - If you are not sure which district your school is located in you can contact the leadership of MMEA [here](#).

SUMMER

Ask your administration when the building will be open so you can spend some time in the room getting to know your space. Use your time in the room to begin formulating ideas for seating, equipment storage, and traffic flow. Depending on the circumstances you may want to visit with the previous music teacher and ask for their advice on the position. Spend some time driving around the community, having lunch at the local restaurants, getting gas at the local gas stations, anything you can do to get a feel for the culture of the area.

Summer Prep Checklist:

- Acquire your schedule.
- Find your room(s).
- Read district and building policies.
- Find and read your district's music curriculum plan.
- Compile or locate a calendar of important dates (performances, deadlines, etc.).
 - Make sure your events are on the school district's calendar.
 - Check with the other teachers in your department for possible conflicts for the entire year.
- Compile handbook and plan grading procedures.
- Go through your music library and equipment inventory just to see what resources you have.
 - Check inventory (instruments/uniforms/robes/other equipment) for needed repairs.
- Find out what technology is available to you and learn how to use it.
- Post required emergency plans in your room.
- Review class rosters - print if necessary.
- Develop your rules and consequences.
 - Keep rules to 3-5 general rules that can be posted in the room.
- Send out an email to parents and students. Items to include (after administration approval):



Missouri Music Educators Association

A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

- Schedule of events
- Medical forms
- Performance contract (if appropriate)
- Contact student leaders as needed.
- Plan for music distribution (check past programs if available for past selections).
- Plan for uniform/choir robe distribution.

Develop your plans for the following:

- How students enter and exit the room
- Expectations for starting class
 - Seating charts
 - Procedure for getting equipment/music
 - Attendance procedure
- The hall pass procedure
- Restroom breaks
- Emergency contingency plans
- Paperwork procedures (music copies, worksheets, etc.)
- Cell phone policy (if there is not a district-wide policy in place)

BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

The first days of school are critical to your success in the profession. It is during this time that you begin to build relationships with students, parents, and staff.

FIRST DAY

It is worth the effort to make sure the room is ready before the students arrive for class. Have the correct number of chairs and equipment needed for the first day. When preparing, consider the following:

First Day Prep Checklist:

- Class lists
- Lesson plans
- Attendance book
- Handbooks, syllabus and/or other handouts
- Pencils
- Music folders and music
- Resources needed for the first day

FIRST CLASS

The first class is the most important. Students will know what to expect from your class based on their experience that first day.

Some general things that can be done on the first day:

- Introduce yourself (a short presentation is appropriate)
- Discuss goals and expectations
- Teach and practice procedures
- Plan an activity to help you learn about your students such as an interest survey. For an example click [here](#).
- Do something musical. Since many students in a choral classroom haven't yet been seated by voice, here are some activities that can be used:
 - Work on breathing exercises



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A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

- Vocal exercises and warm-ups
- Work on steady beat/rhythm exercises/games
- Body percussion videos from YouTube
- Remind students of what they need for the next class

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

Now that you have successfully made it through the preparatory and introductory phases of the school year, it is time to forge ahead with day to day tasks and setting up both you and your students for success.

Some general things that should be done throughout the year:

Before school starts and throughout the year:

- Keep parents and administrators informed of upcoming events and performances.
 - Band App
 - Remind
 - Google Classroom
 - Google Calendar

August/ September

- Learn the school's procedures, including the month/time of year, for:
 - Purchase orders
 - Transportation requests
 - Professional development
 - Facility requests
 - Field trip policies
 - Fundraising requests
- Join professional organizations particular to your field.
Staying involved and establishing connections within your specific content area is an integral part of your success as an educator. The following is a link to your state-level professional organization:
 - [Missouri Choral Directors Association](#)
- Apply for professional development opportunities and submit the proper paperwork for conferences.
 - MMEA Mentoring Conference (September)
 - MMEA In Service Workshop and Conference (January)
 - MCDA Summer Conference (July)
- Prepare a "sub tub" for emergency absences. This can be a physical tub, or a digital file with everything needed for a sub to come in and be successful filling in for you. Be sure to include:
 - Class rosters
 - Bell schedule
 - Class schedule
 - Restroom and lunch procedures
 - Activities that can be completed by students that anyone can lead

December



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- Reflect on the first semester. What worked? What didn't? Make the appropriate changes for spring semester.

January

- Visit with the administration about the budget for next year.
- Revisit procedures and deadlines for all spring contests and festivals.
- Submit travel requests for the spring if you haven't done so already.

March

- Visit with the counselor to find out when scheduling for next year begins. If you have an auditioned ensemble, talk about when you need to have auditions completed for scheduling purposes.
- Visit with the counselor about the testing schedule so you aren't caught off guard if students miss rehearsals.

April

- Hold auditions for fall ensembles.

END OF THE YEAR:

The end of the school year wrap up can be a stressful and labor-intensive time. It is also the time that planning can begin for the following year.

- Recruit new students for next year's ensembles.
- Set the calendar for next year's events.
- Spend the rest of your budget.
 - If you don't use it, you'll lose it!
- Prepare a budget plan or requisition equipment for next year (if you haven't already).
- Take inventory of instruments and equipment.
- Arrange for needed equipment and facility maintenance.
- Check in uniforms/robes and arrange for cleaning or storage.
- Check with custodians to see how the room should be left for summer cleaning.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

There are many common scenarios that happen in all music classrooms. Many times problems escalate because the students are trying to find out what you will accept. **Remember, what you allow, you encourage.** Decide what your limits are, and then enforce the rules consistently. **Always** check your school district's policies and procedures and any individual behavioral or educational student plans first before developing your classroom management/discipline plan.

Consider utilizing the following strategies in the classroom:

- **Classroom Rules & Procedures**
 - Many discipline issues can be solved with well-prepared procedures. Have a few basic rules and consequences that can be applicable to all situations and post in a prominent place. Greet students at the door and explain your procedures and expectations on the first day.
- **Learning Names**



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A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

- Learning the names of your students is extremely important. It helps with discipline and builds relationships. Use yearbooks, class pictures, digital photos or name tags to help in that task.
- **Class is Talking Too Much**
 - Change the seating/riser arrangement.
 - Talk to the student after class.
 - Move close to the student/use proximity to discourage unwanted behavior.
 - Make a phone call home if it is an ongoing problem. A preventative phone call can often prevent a major problem later on down the road.
 - Most of the time ensemble classes talk too much because the teacher is talking too much. Talk less and sing more. When you have to rehearse a section give a directive for the other sections. “While I work with the altos, sopranos, tenors, basses find all the do-re-mi patterns in measures 8-24.” Be sure to ask follow up questions. “Tenors, how many patterns were there?”
- **Disrespectful Behavior**
 - Stay calm and collected.
 - Don’t yell or argue.
 - Ask to see the student after class.
 - Remove the student from the room if warranted. Make sure you have checked with your principal ahead of time about the school’s procedure for sending students to the office.
 - Always aim to correct the behavior, not criticize the student.
 - Reaffirm that you dislike the behavior, not the student.
- **Singing Out of Turn**
 - Ask the student to see you after class.
 - Stand closer to the student if possible.
 - A good way to prevent this is to increase student involvement. Make sure they are actively listening to what’s around them. Ask questions about what they are hearing. Limit your corrective comments to students to ten words/two sentences or less.
 - Have alternative assignments ready. For repeat offenders, give one warning, then give the consequence. (For example: singers are removed from active participation in the class and they have to do the alternative assignment).
- **Unmotivated Students**
 - Celebrate successes, no matter how small
 - Set short term and long term goals and post them somewhere in the room
 - Find out what their interests are. Establish rapport by finding common ground.
 - Take trips. Even small day trips to perform in local venues are motivating.
 - Be patient. It takes time for students to trust you,
- **Students Not Showing Up for Performances**
 - Provide a calendar of events at the beginning of the year.
 - Send a “contract” home stating that the parents and students understand that the students are expected to attend these events. Have them sign the “contract” and return it.
 - Communicate with parents months in advance. Send concert dates home in newsletters, on social media, texting apps, etc.
- **Verbal Reprimand Strategy**

Use this individually with a student when you are needing to correct a single behavior:

 - Explain to the student that the behavior they engaged in was not acceptable in your classroom.



Missouri Music Educators Association

A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

- Have them explain to you what the appropriate behavior should have been.
- Remind them that you value them as individuals, but you don't approve of the behavior.
- Let them know what the consequences will be if it happens again.
- Reaffirm that you think well of them, but not their behavior in this situation.

LESSON PLANNING

It is always a good idea to OVER plan. Make sure you plan more than you think you can get through in a lesson. Students with “free time” will find ways to fill it...and this is usually when discipline issues arise. It is also a good idea to have two or three activities that you can always use if you get through your lesson plan too quickly. Search online or ask experienced teachers for some activities you can use. It is also better to plan a little every day rather than all in one sitting.

Things to keep in mind as you plan your lessons:

- Goals:
 - What do you expect your students to be able to do by the end of the lesson, unit, or day?
 - How does it fit your overall curriculum?
- Objectives:
 - What do you want the students to know/be able to do by the end of the lesson?
- Materials Needed:
 - What materials will you need to be sure this lesson is successful?
 - This helps you make sure things are prepared ahead of time.
- Lesson Description:
 - This is a step-by-step description of what and how you are planning to teach the lesson.
- Closure:
 - What activity or activities will help reinforce the learning that took place during the lesson?
- Assessment:
 - How do you plan to assess the skills that the students were to learn during the lesson?
 - It can be as simple as a personal observation to as complex as rubrics for each student.

FESTIVALS AND CONTESTS

All-State Ensembles

The audition process begins at the District level and culminates with selection to the All-State Groups. Selected musicians and vocalists have the opportunity to audition to perform in elementary choir, high school choir, concert band, jazz band, orchestra and The Collective, a non-traditional ensemble focusing on modern music. Auditions for the elementary choir and The Collective are administered by MMEA. The All-State Choir, Band, Orchestra, and Jazz Band auditions are overseen by their respective professional organizations. The links for their websites are listed below:

- [Missouri Music Educators Association](#) (MMEA)
- [Missouri Choir Directors Association](#) (MCDA)
- [Missouri Bandmasters Association](#) (MBA)
- [Missouri String Teachers Association](#) (MoASTA)
- [Missouri Association for Jazz Education](#) (MOAJE)
- [Missouri School Small Band Directors Association](#) (MSSBDA)



Missouri Music Educators Association

A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

Missouri All-State Children's Choir

Deadlines and the audition process are posted on the MMEA website at the beginning of each school year. The Elementary Choir is open to 4th and 5th grade students who are enrolled in their school choral program. An audition recording is uploaded for each student auditioning. Details on the audition piece and submission details can be found online each fall.

The Collective

The goal of The Collective is to bring together young musicians to work collaboratively to create original music. The instrumentation of the group is flexible and open to all students in grades 9-12. The instrumentation will vary depending based on auditions and is limited to 9-15 members. Students do not need to be enrolled in a school ensemble to participate. However, they do need to be sponsored by a teacher, parent or administrator from their school. Deadlines and the audition process are posted on the MMEA website at the beginning of each school year.

MSHSAA Events

The following events are administered by the Missouri State High School Activities Association..

- District Solo & Ensembles
- State Solo & Ensembles
- State Large Ensembles

You will need to create an account on the MSHSAA website. This [link](#) will take you to the main page. Click on the Login button, then on the register button to create your account. Dates, the music manual, and the required music list for solos and ensembles (PML) can be found under the “Music Activities” heading. All solos and ensembles must come from this list. There are no literature restrictions for the large ensemble festivals. However, sight reading is a required component and you will find the sight reading criteria on this page.

Conference Level Events

Many schools throughout the state are part of a smaller, regional area known as a conference. Many of these conferences host clinics, solo & small ensemble festivals, large ensemble festivals, and honor ensembles. Check with your district officers for guidance on what conferences exist in your area and whether your school belongs to the aforementioned conference.

Local Festivals

Your district president’s contact information can be found here: <https://mmea.net/leadership/> They will guide you in finding festivals in your area.