



New Teacher Handbook

September 2023



Missouri Music Educators Association

A Federated State Affiliate of the National Association for Music Education

New Teacher Handbook

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.

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. 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.
- Plan grading procedures.
- Go through your music library and equipment inventory to see what resources you have.
 - Check inventory 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.
- Develop your rules and consequences.

Develop your plans for the following:

- How students enter and exit the room
- Expectations for starting class
 - Seating charts
 - Procedure for getting equipment out and putting it away
 - Attendance procedure
- The hall pass procedure
- Develop your restroom break policy
- Emergency contingency plans based on the district's emergency plan/policy



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- Paperwork procedures (music copies, worksheets, etc.)
- Cell phone policy (if there is not a district-wide policy in place)
- Identify trusted colleagues, both new and “experienced” and in and out of district to serve as mentors for the year.

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, stands and equipment needed for the first day. When preparing, consider the following:

First Day Prep Checklist:

- Class lists
- Lesson plans
- Attendance book
- Pencils
- Music folders and music if needed
- 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 are:

- Introduce yourself (consider a short presentation with pictures).
- Briefly discuss goals and expectations.
- Teach and practice procedures for entering and exiting the room, getting and replacing equipment, transitions, etc.
- Plan an activity to help you learn about your students.
- Do something musical!
 - Work on breathing exercises.
 - Do vocal exercises and warm-ups.
 - Work on steady beat/ rhythm exercises/games.
 - Body percussion videos from YouTube.

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.
 - Remind
 - Google Classroom
 - Google Calendar



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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.
 - [Missouri Music Educators Association](#)
- Apply for professional development opportunities and submit the proper paperwork for conferences.
 - MMEA Mentoring Conference (September)
 - MMEA In Service Workshop and Conference (January)
 - Kodaly Workshops
 - Orff Workshops
- 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 (Google elementary music sub tub for ideas)

December

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

January

- Visit with administration about budget procedures for next year.

March

- Visit with the counselor about the testing schedule so you aren't caught off guard if students miss rehearsals.

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 you can take steps to help next year get off to a smooth start. Here are some things to consider.

- 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 instrument and facility maintenance.



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- 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**
 - Learning the names of your students is extremely important. It helps with discipline and builds relationships. Use yearbooks, class pictures, or digital photos to help in that task.
 - Use tent cards, tags on chairs, and seating charts to help you learn names quickly.
- **Class is Talking Too Much**
 - Change the seating arrangement.
 - Talk to the student after class.
 - Move close to the student as you are teaching. Use your 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.
 - Visit with the classroom teacher for student specific strategies.
 - Most of the time ensemble classes talk too much because the teacher is talking too much. Talk less and play/sing more.
- **Disrespectful Behavior**
 - Stay calm and collected.
 - Don't yell or argue.
 - Have a "safe space" in your room. This can be an isolated chair where the student can be seated away from the main activity. Tell them when they can correct the behavior then can rejoin the group.
 - Ask to see the student after class.
 - Inform the classroom teacher of the incident.
 - Remove the student from the room if warranted. Make sure you have checked with your principal ahead of time on the school's procedure for sending students to the office. This should be a last resort.
 - Always aim to correct the behavior, not criticize the student.
 - Reaffirm that you dislike the behavior, not the student.
- **Playing/Singing Out of Turn**
 - Stand closer to the student if possible.



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- 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.
- Ask to see the student after class. Explain why their behavior is not acceptable and that if it continues they will not be able to do the "fun" parts of class.
- **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.
 - 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.
- **Unmotivated Students**
 - Celebrate successes, no matter how small.
 - Set short term and long term goals. Post them somewhere in the room.
 - Find out what their interests are. Establish rapport by finding common ground.
 - Encourage participation in elementary classes, but don't push. If you continue to do fun activities they will eventually decide they want to be a part of it.
- **Students Not Showing Up for Performances**
 - Provide a calendar of events to the parents and on the master district calendar at the beginning of the year.
 - Communicate with parents months in advance. Send concert dates home in newsletters, on social media, texting apps, etc.

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.

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:



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- 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.

RESOURCES

MMEA Mentor Rene Spencer has provided this incredible resource filled with lesson plans, assessment ideas, classroom management and so much more. Click [here](#).

FESTIVALS AND CONTESTS

All-State Ensembles

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.

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.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Staying involved and establishing connections within your specific content area is an integral part of your success as an educator. The following is a list of state-level professional organizations and links to their respective websites:

- [Missouri Music Educators Association](#)
- [American Orff-Schulwerk Association](#)
- [Organization of American Kodaly Educators](#)