**Table 4.1. Classroom Rules and Musical Expectations.**

**Classroom Rules**

**Be Prompt**

**Be Prepared**

**Be Productive**

**Be Polite**

**Be Positive**

**Be A Problem Solver**

**Musical Expectations**

Play with balanced, extended **Posture**

Play with relaxed and excellent **Position**

Play with a beautiful **Tone**

Play with clear, ringing **Intonation**

Play with a steady **Pulse** and precise **Rhythms** with a sense of **Meter** and

at an appropriate **Tempo**

Listen to others while you play (**Balance** your part with others)

Play with **Style** appropriate to the musicand similar to your peers

Most importantly, play **Musically and Expressively**!!! Play with intent

and play in a way that invokes thoughts, moods, characters, stories,

and/or emotions in your listeners

**Setting Students up for Success**

Setting students up for success includes:(a)challenging all without overwhelming anyone, (b) deconstruct concepts and sequence instruction, and (c) setting realistic long and short-term goals. Due to space, deconstruct concepts and sequence instruction, and setting realistic long and short-term goals are discussed here.

**Deconstructing concepts**. Deconstruct concepts and sequence instruction. Before you begin playing, you should analyze each piece and complete a skills inventory of each musical selection so that you can teach skills BEFORE you ask them to play. Then, teach the skill sound before sight; experience, then label and then apply it to the specific section in the music. Many people call this repertoire-based warm ups (e.g., Gillespie, 2003). When students are successful, they stay more focused and continue to learn. Again, if students are not successful, they get frustrated and act out or begin making jokes to deflect attention. Therefore, this important teaching principle has behavioral implications.

Deconstructing concepts can work for a variety of issues, from tone, articulations, intonation, and rhythm to musicality and expression. When you scan the musical selection (by ear or by sight), make note of what you think will be problematic for students. Then, create a clear and concise way to teach it, first through modeling, and then having students echo back. You may have a few steps to follow before you meet your goal. That is considered sequencing.

Then, you have to figure out where to start in teaching them. You do not have to start at the beginning of the music. Another aspect of sequencing can be explained with this example.

When I teach Pachelbel’s Canon in D in my string techniques class, I begin teaching “precursors” for shifting and vibrato and we work on this every day in short segments because these skills need time and practice. In the music, I begin at the second variation and teach slurred eighth notes first. Students use their whole bows and change pitches in the middle of the bow. We also practice reading two notes at a time. Then, I teach the next variation, which is detache sixteenth notes. First, I have to teach a new note, C# on the G string. I also teach them to read the music in “groups.” Then, I skip the fourth variation and teach the thirty-second note passage. After this, I teach the beginning because I have been teaching shifting and vibrato exercises this whole time and now we can apply it to the music. Then, I can jump to the fourth variation because students need to shift, play in third position, and use vibrato.

**Setting realistic long and short-term goals.** If you were running a marathon, how would you schedule your workouts? Would you just run as long as you could, just to see what your capacity is at that moment and work from there? I do not suggest it.

Instead, I suggest taking the concept of deconstructing and thinking about how to do so in bigger chunks. As a teacher, understanding where your students are musically and what might challenge them is important. Then, you have to set short term, realistic goals.

For example, I gave regular individual playing tests on specific passages. For at least the first semester, it was every seven days because we were on a seven-day cycle but for others, you might decide every week or every two weeks would be best. Predetermine what 3-5 excerpts will be on the playing test at the beginning of the cycle and work systematically to teach students. In addition to building community, this keeps students accountable for their progress and helps them track their progress. It also helped them prioritize practicing. Some students said that parents would have them do their other homework and activities before practicing but knowing they had to practice “for a test” helped them practice more regularly.

**Building Community**

I continue the discussion about ways to build community in the classroom here in three sections: (a) encouraging students to be their best selves; (b) pairing students; and (c) taking students' personal and musical interests and opinions into consideration.

**Encouraging students to be their best selves.** Encouraging my students to be their best, musically and behaviorally, was always important to me. In fact, part of my teaching philosophy was to help students grow musically, individually, and socially. Students do not always naturally encourage each other, though. This can be taught and reinforced until it happens spontaneously.

Taking time to do team building and social activities was important to me. These can happen inside or outside of the classroom. We met as sectionals during the school day and as an orchestra after school once a week in a three-hour rehearsal. This was considered an eighth class and each section took turns bringing snacks for each other to be shared at breaktime. Although a small thing, food was always appreciated and they looked forward to discovering what their peers had to share with them and it became a bit of an ice-breaker during the break.

We would have time to share what was important to each us when sharing specific answers to questions. Even now, when I have conducted All-States, Regional, or District orchestras or when I teach at camps, everyone partners with someone else to find out a few things about each other and then introduce their new “friend” to the group. I often ask name, where they are from, how many siblings they have, something they love to do, and what they love most about making music on their instrument.

I used to have my high school students perform playing tests in front of each other every seven school days. Everyone knew what sections they would be playing and we would have been working on those sections specifically many times during the days before. I would begin with the first chair players and everyone would finger along. There would be real learning happening during that period because everyone was so focused. Students could offer one thing that was excellent and one thing to consider improving. The best part was when one of the students played well who had previously been struggling, everyone erupted into applause. We really felt like we had a stake in everyone’s successes.

Before concerts, I often lead students to set all their outside concerns aside for the next

hour and be responsible to one another. I explain that this is the only time we will be in this moment, playing this music with this group of people and with these audience members. It is our time to share the experience with one another and make it special. This helped us all push away other thoughts and come together to create magical moments in the present.

**Pairing students.** Pairing students together to help each other is important for multiple reasons. First, I assign something specific to watch for. This ranges from posture and position, tone intonation, rhythm, etc.. To teach something is to help solidify it in their minds. Also, students like to be helpful and other students might want to hear something worded slightly differently. It also lets the teacher have time to go right to the student or students who are struggling and give them a little extra attention while everyone else is engaged. For more on this, **see Chapters 3, 11, and 12.**

You could also assign orchestra buddies for multiple reasons. If there is something a student does not understand, you could have a sign to show that the orchestra buddies are working on it together. Pairing students might happen outside of the classroom, also. Orchestra buddies might be practice partners, or one could be the “teacher.” They could use school practice rooms, if those are available to you.

**Taking students' personal and musical interests and opinions into consideration.** I believe that building relationships with students, engaging them musically and socially in what they consider to be meaningful ways, and motivating students all relate to proactive classroom management strategies. This was also explored in Chapter 3. Finding ways to take students’ personal and musical interests and opinions into consideration should be done regularly throughout the year. Two examples would be to offer a few literature choices and have students vote on which to play or decide which activities to participate in outside of school. The trick is to be sure that the options you offer (and suggestions you take) are thoughtfully considered in terms of students’ interest, curricular considerations, and what you may have to substitute or omit.

This also helps students enter a state of “flow,” which furthercontributes to this feeling of community in the classroom. Csikszentmihalyi described the experience of someone becoming fully absorbed in a challenging activity of interest to them, they lose sense of time and self, which results in feelings of satisfaction and a sense of wellbeing. Therefore, challenging all without overwhelm anyone also contributes to a community feel in the classroom.

**References**

Gillespie, R. (2003). Repertoire-based warmups. In D. Littell & L. Bergonzi’s (ed.). Teaching

through performance in orchestra, (v. 2), (pp. 47-62.)