



End-of-the-Year Activities in the Music Classroom

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You have finished the last concert of the year and are left with one or more class periods before summer hits. If you happen to teach middle school like I do, the thought of all that “free time” is enough to cause panic attacks and sleepless nights! There is nothing more dreadful than a room full of middle schoolers with no structure!

Here are ideas that worked for me to keep the end of the year positive and successful both for my middle and high school students. I have found it helpful to have a change of pace after a concert and a busy year, so I try many different activities that keep things fun but also remain musically focused.

- **Movie:** Everyone loves a good movie, and luckily there are many that relate to music. They can be musicals (*Sound of Music*; *Annie*; *Hello, Dolly*; etc.), dramas (*Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Music of the Heart*, etc.), or something like *Fantasia*! You will score extra points with the students if you provide snacks.
- **Solos/Ensembles:** Have a day during which students perform for the class. It's a great way for them to perform music they want to perform and a chance to see and hear some students who might surprise you with their talent! I always celebrate their efforts because a student is incredibly vulnerable when making music in front of his or her peers.
- **Awards:** I and/or my students construct a ballot consisting of fun, serious, and ridiculous awards. We vote on them, and I make up awards and present them during class.
- **Games:** Divide the class into two teams and go head-to-head with a music theory challenge. Identify note names, rhythms, rests, solfege, terms, etc. I have a small dry erase board on which I write and then turn it around quickly so they can answer, or I ask a question verbally if no drawing is necessary. Someone tallies the scores, and the winning team gets candy!
 - **Rhythmic dictation I:** This fun game can take an entire class period depending on the ability level of your class and how far you want to push it. You can begin by having everyone clap quarter notes and then show the students how the notes are written on the board. Do the same with eighth notes. Then do easy one-measure or fewer combos in which you clap a rhythm and they write it. It will take them a while to get it. Be patient and help guide students through the process by giving an example(s) and showing them how you would figure it out. After the kids get the hang of it, you can divide them into teams.
 - **Rhythmic dictation II:** Divide into two (or more) groups. Each group forms a line. You (the teacher) write a simple rhythm that you show only to the first person in each line. They then tap that rhythm on the shoulder of the person in front of them, sending the rhythm along that line. The last person in the group must write the rhythm that was taped on his or her shoulder. If the rhythm is correct, that person receives one point. You then write a new rhythm; the line order rotates, and you show the new person the rhythm he or she

must tap and pass along. The line with the most correct rhythms wins!

- **New music:** I stay away from music that is terribly serious, but the students will keep working if you choose good, quality music to keep them motivated. I never let students choose the music, but I do listen to their suggestions. This is a great time to find something they suggested that is appropriate for their ability level. It can be a pop song or music from a movie, etc.
- **The classic picnic:** Here is a great way to spend time with your students in a less structured environment. Keep costs low by having the kids bring food. See if the gym or schoolyard is available for games!

I hope I have offered a few ideas to end your school year on a high note and to save you hours of Googling at home.

Singing in a Chorus—Do’s and Don’ts for Church or Community Chorus Members

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Here are suggestions for singers who wish to be successful in a church or community choir—or even in a school or college choir!

- Do not chat during rehearsals.
- Be punctual or, even better, be early. If you are late, be inconspicuous and quietly take a seat. Refrain from asking questions that may already have been answered.
- Vocal warm-ups are critical to a successful rehearsal. Do not arrive late to avoid them.
- Arrive at rehearsal ready to enjoy the redeeming, inspirational process of music-making.
- If you need to stand, do so. Don’t interrupt the rehearsal by asking permission.
- Be prepared. Maintain a current folder with a schedule.
- When the director is working with another section, follow along in your music. There will undoubtedly be comments that pertain to your section.
- Be responsible. If you have to miss a rehearsal, sign out for that date or let your section leader know in advance.
- Always have a pencil and eraser; always mark your music.
- Number the measures in every piece of music.
- Remain open to learning new ideas and new approaches to the music.
- When sight reading, you are allowed to omit the text and sing on a “doo” or a “dah” syllable, especially when working in a foreign language.
- Do your homework by practicing at home if possible. Take your folder home.
- Do not chat.
- Mutual respect must be practiced in rehearsals by all. You do have a voice, but there is a proper time to use it.
- Prior to rehearsal is not the time to engage the conductor in talk about leaving early or the need for missing a rehearsal. He/she is focused on the work at hand.
- Do not assume the director needs your help identifying or solving problems (unless she/he asks).
- If a director’s instructions don’t seem clear, raise your hand and wait to be recognized. If you are not called on, leave the issue for another time. It will be dealt with eventually.
- Be pro-active. Offer to help with setting up for rehearsals, breakdowns, and refreshments.
- Do not chat!