

CHS Bands Reading Assignment:
Some suggestions on being an effective student of music
by David Zerkel

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article below. Complete the *Article Worksheet* following and submit before the end of the trimester.

ARTICLE:

Some suggestions on being an effective student of music

By David Zerkel
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Here are some suggestions on steps that can be taken to be a more effective student of music:

1. Take your classes seriously. Theory, Ear-training and Music History provide you with the tools to understand the language of music and your mastery of these subjects WILL help you play your instrument better. If you have had a math course beyond algebra, music theory should present no problems, as it is structured in a very systematic way. Ear-training will help you learn what you need to hear, whether you are playing your instrument or standing in front of a band. Music History will equip you with the tools to approach your interpretations from informed perspective and will give you the insight needed to play with style.
2. Listen to as much music as you can! Naxos (or YouTube, Pandora, iTunes) online music library is a great resource, as is our incredibly complete music library. A hard, but not impossible, goal is to spend the same amount of hours listening that you spend practicing. Listening to music and familiarizing yourself with a broad spectrum of music is where your REAL musical education will take place.
3. Learn and know your scales and arpeggios, as they are the building blocks of western music. Realizing that virtually everything that you play is constructed with scales and arpeggios will make mastering your instrument exponentially easier.
4. Schedule your practice time as though it were a class and make yourself a tough attendance policy. Success in music, like anything else in life, is dependent upon disciplined and persistent effort. Hard work will trump talent any day of the week. The world is filled with incredibly talented people who never reached their potential because they were lazy. Each of you has the power to positively affect the climate of music at the School of Music, simply by doing what needs to be done in the practice room. It is really cool to not suck . . . daily practice will help you to appreciate your potential and your ability to improve.
5. Go to concerts! There is no substitution for listening to live music—every performance you hear provides you with the opportunity to learn something about your own performances. Whether you will teach or perform, you will spend the rest of your life evaluating performances and diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of what you hear. You will develop this skill much more quickly if you are going to concerts.

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6. Embrace what technology has to offer us in developing as musicians. Rhythm and Pitch are the two empirical truths in music—either they are right or they are wrong. Don't look at your metronome and tuner as though they are nagging you that you are not good enough—learn to make chamber music with your Dr. Beat and to look at your tuner as the teller of truth. If you really want to use technology to improve your performance skills, purchase a digital recorder such as a Zoom 2 (or use Quicktime, Garage Band, or Audacity on your computer) to record your practice. This will help you to become your own teacher. The greatest period of growth that I have ever had as a developing musician happened when I was recording and evaluating my practice on a daily basis.
7. Be curious! Strive to know the repertoire for your instrument. Practice something everyday that is NOT PART OF YOUR LESSON ASSIGNMENT FOR THE WEEK. Read ahead in an etude book or check out some music from the library. This will help your sight-reading skills immeasurably. Strive to be a comprehensive musician, not just a jock on your horn!
8. Play with your peers! Form a chamber music group or play duets with a peer as much as you can. Chamber music empowers each of us to make musical decisions without the input of a director, which is a critical skill. Playing chamber music will also help grow your ears in a dramatic way.
9. Be serious about your pursuit of excellence. Set the bar high and work hard to be the best that you can be. Music is an extraordinarily competitive field—remember that there is always someone somewhere that is working harder than you are and someday you will meet them at the audition or the interview. You owe it to yourself to be the best musician that you can be.
10. Know that every great musician in the world still considers himself or herself a student of music. Wynton Marsalis is a music student. Joe Alessi is a music student, as is Yo Yo Ma, Simon Rattle and Emmanuel Ax. Make lifelong improvement and lifelong learning your goal. I am not as good as I think I am and neither are you. The older I get, the more I realize that I have only begun to scratch the surface of what there is to know. Use this blessing of an opportunity that you have as a full-time music student to your advantage. Your hard work will pay off in the end!

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ARTICLE WORKSHEET [25pts]

NAME: _____ DATE COMPLETED: _____

PART 1—summarize briefly the 10 suggestions proposed by David Zerkel.

1. —
2. —
3. —
4. —
5. —
6. —
7. —
8. —
9. —
10. —

PART 2—Select one or two suggestions above to implement this trimester and fill out the bullets below.

- I have chosen suggestion: _____
- I chose this suggestion because: _____

- I will implement this suggestion by: _____

