

## **BUSMEA's - A Clinic on Clinics**

Erin Dodds

Brandon East Side Band Director

[Dodds.erin@bsd.ca](mailto:Dodds.erin@bsd.ca)

Congratulations! You are interested in being a clinician. Now what? Here are some things to think about before to the clinic, once you're there, and after.

Clinics are a great opportunity to build your skills as an educator, to get more comfortable being in front of students, to get your professional name out there, and to meet and interact with educators who are out in the real world. Remember, when you are hired as a clinician, you are being hired for a job. This job could lead to more teaching opportunities, a reference for a future position, could be for a future co-operating teacher, or even a future co-worker. You always want to put your best foot forward and be professional.

### **Before the Clinic**

#### **1. Who? What? Where? When?**

- Who is the clinic for? Do you know the director?
- What age group will you be working with?
  - Are you working with elementary age students? Middle years? Senior years?
- Do you know how long the clinic will last?
- Travel plans
  - How are you getting to the clinic? Do you know where the clinic is happening? Is there a carpool set up already or do you have to find one?

#### **2. Why?**

- What is the purpose of the clinic?
  - Master class
  - Learning new repertoire
  - Kickstart clinic/first day on the instrument
  - Clinic to teach/help with specific issues
  - To challenge the stronger students. Help others catch up. Keep the middle group motivated.
- Whatever the type of clinic, listen to what the band director is looking for and stick to it!
- Do you know which instrument you are working with at the clinic?
- If you are working on repertoire at the clinic, do you know which pieces they will be?

#### **3. Did you bring all the information you have about the clinic with you?**

### **Packing List**

- Instrument (and extra supplies)
- Instrument stand
- Pencil and paper! (extras pencils never hurt)
- Tuner
- Metronome
- A fun piece to play for the students
- A watch
- A little mirror
- Any other materials you need to teach
- Small repair kit if you've got it (for any woodwind, I recommend small screw drivers)

## **Day of the clinic – Before the clinic starts**

### **1. Looking the part**

- It is always better to be overdressed than underdressed. There may be some clinics where you can wear jeans, but I always recommend thinking twice about wearing them.

### **2. Arrival time**

- Please don't arrive at the time that the clinic starts! (You're on time if you're early. You're late if you're on time). I would recommend arriving at least 20 minutes early.

### **3. Meet the teacher**

- When you arrive, make sure to find the band director and introduce yourself.
- Use this time to ask details about the clinic:
  - What information / which pieces are priority?
  - Are there instrument specific topics they would like covered?
  - What's the schedule for the day?
  - How long is the clinic?
  - Multiple clinics that day?
  - Do the students get breaks?

### **4. Clinic Space**

- If you have time, take a few minutes to set up your clinic space before the students get there.
- You may or may not actually have time to see your space before the clinic starts. Take some time to think about possible set ups before arriving.

## **Clinic Time!**

No matter what kind of clinic you are doing, there are common strategies that can always be used.

- Get to know the students
- Reinforce fundamentals
- PLAY! PLAY! PLAY!
- At the end of the clinic, use the last few minutes to review what you've worked on

### **1. Get to know your students (and let them know you)**

- One of the best classroom management techniques is to know your students' names
  - After introducing yourself to the students, ask their name and something fun about them. Write down their names so you can reference it throughout the clinic.
  - Not only can knowing their name help keep their attention, but it can make the students feel that little bit special.
- Don't be afraid to show your personality during the clinics. It's okay to have fun in the clinic and with the students, just make sure to keep it professional.

### **2. Reinforce the fundamentals**

- Characteristic Tone
  - Constant reminders to check their posture (always a good thing to review at the start too) and breathing.
  - Throughout the clinic, take time to check their instrument hold and set up. Sometimes students create some bad habits unintentionally.
- Rhythm / Pulse
  - If they are having troubles playing a section, break it down and simplify the problem.
  - Count and clap a section. If they can do it, move on to count and "airband".
- Pitch / Notes
  - Are they playing the correct pitch?
  - Check to make sure their posture and instrument set aren't inhibiting their ability to make sound.
  - Sometimes you might have to check to see if it's an instrument issue. Small leaks or valves that are no longer in the right place could be an easy fix.

### **3. PLAY! PLAY! PLAY!**

- Playing is the best classroom management for a clinic
- If you aren't sure what to say, don't stop them. Let them play!
- Break sections down. Work in small chunks, adding as they become more comfortable.
- Differentiate the playing. Airband, speak letter names, sing the line, sizzle the rhythms, use air streams for articulations, buzz, make up a funny saying/words to help with rhythm, count and clap, or any combination of these. Or have half the group play and the other half count.
- If the students are young, or have been playing lots, these techniques are great to give their faces a break as well.
- Model. Play your instrument. Demonstrate what you want them to do. Sometimes that is easier than actually explaining what you are looking for.
- Create loops of difficult sections. The student can loop one bar (or hard part) over and over, or you can alternate with them to give them a consistent model.

### **4. At the end of the clinic, use the last few minutes to review what you've worked on**

- Use this time to see what they remember from the clinic.
- Give them reminders of important concepts they should take with them.
- Also, it is great feedback for you to see what stuck with them or what didn't.
- DON'T LET THE STUDENTS LEAVE THE CLINIC EARLY!!

## **After the Clinic**

### **1. Once your clinic is finished, make sure the space is clean.**

- Return room back to the way it was when you got there.

### **2. Give feedback to the director**

- Talk to the director about what was covered in the clinic.
- Let them know if there were any issues with students (either behaviour or potential instrument issues)
- If they gave you music or any supplies to use during the clinic, give it back.

## **Other Thoughts about Clinics**

- Students want to be challenged. They are excited to prove to you what they can do. To this day, they still surprise me at how hard they are willing to work and what they can accomplish.
- Use metaphors or stories to help them interpret/picture what's happening in the music.
- It only takes one personalized compliment to help build their confidence. Or a high five. Or a subtle thumbs up.
- Walk around while the students play. You can check everyone's playing position and might hear something new to work on.
- Classroom management is your responsibility during the clinic, unless there's something big happening, then let the teacher know so they can deal with it.
- Don't be afraid if the director comes in to see your clinic. Keep doing what you're doing but also don't be afraid to ask questions if needed (tempo, specific sections to work on, ask them to listen to the kids show what they've been working on).
- Remember, clinics are an opportunity to practice different teaching methods you've learned in class, but make sure it is appropriate to the situation.
- Don't be afraid to connect with the students and show them how much you enjoy making music. Share that joy with them! For some students, you may be the first professional they've seen that plays their instrument.

Being a clinician is a great opportunity. I wish you all the best of luck going forward. If you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email at any time. I look forward to seeing you out there as clinicians!