

The Division of Education Newsletter

.Congratulations to V.I.P

Joni Perez

for being named Phi Beta Mu's Young Band Master of the Year for Texas!



Joni is Head Band Director at The Woodlands High School in The Woodlands, Texas

Conn-Selmer **DIVISION of EDUCATION**

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser Vice President of Education tlautzenheiser@conn-selmer.com Cell: 260.410.0717

Michael Kamphuis Managing Director, Division of Education mkamphuis@conn-selmer.com Work: 574.523.0677 Cell: 574.607.6000

Kelly Bryan Manager of Educational Outreach, Division of Education kbryan@conn-selmer.com Work: 574.523.0651 Cell: 574.329.8727

> **Grant Johnston** Program Coordinator gjohnston@conn-selmer.com Work: 574.523.0701

A Note from Dr. Tim Greetings! In this week's edition of Touchpoint, you will hear from my dear friend, Paula Crider. In this article she goes BACK-TO-THE BASICS; reminding us that we MUST remember where we've been in order to plan for the future.

A New Beginning for Beginners by Paula Crider

As a new school year rapidly approaches, here are a few brief thoughts on a critically important aspect of teaching, that of beginners. I doubt that anyone would argue against the adage: "It's far easier to train good habits, than to correct poor habits later on." Thoughts on those important "first" lessons follow.

Don't be too quick to have your beginners play from a beginning method book. I know this may sound like radical orthodoxy, but I believe it is crucial to allow beginners to learn to use their ears before engaging their eyes.

I have found that learning note names, how to count, how to hold the instrument, how to form an embouchure, how to spin air through the horn, etc. can overwhelm beginning students with too many tasks too soon. The result can often be a child who develops bad habits, becomes frustrated, and never experiences the joy of producing a beautiful, characteristic tone.

I enjoyed much success by having my beginners focus on playing one note with proper embouchure, posture, hand position and breath support. They then moved to two notes, then three. When we could play three tones, I then encouraged students to improvise; to play whatever they felt (By the way, the first few bars of "Louie, Louie" are always a hit. Even the beginning tuba players become stars.) Improvisation is an often ignored but extremely valuable asset in teaching musicians to be creative, expressive performers at any level.

This need not be a slow, boring process. Make learning fun by engaging the imagination. Invent games to challenge:

- ♦ Long tone "distance races." Who can go the longest without running out of air?
- ♦ Divide the class and set-up rows facing each other. Make the long tones Star Wars "Z" rays, and see which side survives the battle.
- ♦ Give awards for the best tone of the day; allow your students to vote.
- ♦ Invent a signal for all to immediately freeze in place. (I use the Texas "Hook 'Em Horns" Sign). Assign teams and give points for the team with the best posture, hand position and embouchure. This game will allow you to move about the room, encourage, adjust and correct.
- ◆ Take photos of the player with the best embouchure and post it on your band website.
- ◆ Use balloons as a visual aid to develop better breath capacity.
- ♦ Always provide sound models for students to emulate. Pick up an instrument, and show them how it should sound....play games with call and response.

The ideas above are but a small sample of activities to focus on fundamentals. The possibilities are endless when great teachers engage the imagination, making learning both challenging and FUN.

I believe those who seek to develop technical facility first, at the expense of tone, do so at the long term expense of the student. The experience of producing an energized, vibrant characteristic tone can often lead to a life-long passion for music and music-making.