

Best Practices for Hosting a Music Clinician

This document contains suggestions for band directors wishing to invite a guest clinician to work with their band. These ideas are merely suggestions put together by a committee of experienced band directors who have worked with clinicians at their schools or who have served as clinicians themselves. Our committee hopes that these suggestions can serve as a guide to improve the clinician experience for the students, the host band director, and the clinician.

Selecting a clinician

When selecting a clinician, choose someone who has earned the reputation, not only as a successful conductor with their own ensembles, but one who has also demonstrated success as a guest conductor/clinician. Talk to colleagues to get input on clinicians who have skill and experience with the types of ensembles you have in mind (sectionals, Jazz, solo/ensemble, marching or concert band) and the aspects on which you'd like to focus (articulation, style, sonority, etc.). Make sure the potential clinician is aware of and has met all standards set forth by the individual school district in accordance with the Jessica Lunsford Act.

Inviting the clinician

Plan ahead. Out of basic respect, try to contact your choice of clinician early to invite him or her to your school and arrange a date. While local colleagues may be more readily available, a clinician who lives far away or rehearses numerous ensembles annually may likely need to be booked well in advance.

Thoroughly check your own school's calendar to avoid conflicting school events or field trips. Especially with all the testing required of students today, we suggest that you speak directly to your own school's testing coordinator to verify that you won't face conflicts with student testing.

Check with your activities director, the principal's office, the athletic department, and perhaps individual coaches or club sponsors to assure all students can attend the rehearsal and that there is no double-booking of the rehearsal space you want to use, as with a football field, for example.

Have more than one date available if possible.

Contact the clinician in person, by mail, email, or phone. Avoid texting for initial contact.

Maintain regular contact with the clinician with specific reminders about the designated time, date, location, and procedural tasks (parking, signing in, volunteer form, license, etc.) with the school, especially if the clinic will be during the school day.

Professional Development

Consider posting an open invitation to all local colleagues.

Propose to the School District possible Professional Development Points, MIP points, etc for those who attend and observe the clinician's session. This directly ties into Professional Development and teacher evaluations.

Contracts and Compensation

Outline contractual obligations and logistics (compensation, hourly or flat rate, mileage, rehearsal schedule, meals, accommodations, housing, etc.). Discuss as specifically as possible what you would like the clinician to do and be specific about what they will be paid. (A helpful guideline is \$50 an hour or more for an in-town rehearsal, \$75 an hour or more for out of town, which would include travel expenses.) Even with someone who is willing to donate his or her time and effort, at least offer to cover the clinician's expenses. Discuss any other fees with them when you first contact them, update things along the way as necessary, and have a check ready for them the day of the rehearsal.

Prior to the clinic

Ten (10) to fourteen (14) days in advance, confirm plans with a friendly reminder to the clinician and ask if the clinician has any special needs.

Confirm the clinician's visit one week before the date. Let the clinician know the beginning and end time of the rehearsal along with any scheduled breaks.

Send the clinician a map to the school and perhaps even a map of the school, with directions to the office and Band Room or some other designated meeting place. You might include the most convenient way in, where to park, and where restrooms are located. Your clinician would appreciate any advice about how to avoid bad traffic, too.

Explain security procedures for entering the school when they arrive.

Inform the front office that you are expecting a guest and give them the anticipated time of arrival.

Have someone meet the clinician when he or she arrives and show him or her to the Band Room.

Have a clear agenda as to what needs to be rehearsed and who needs to be involved.

Let the clinician know the music you are working on and if there are specific problems or sections of the music you would like him or her to address.

Provide scores—in advance if possible, especially if it's an unfamiliar piece.

Tell the clinician your perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the ensemble.

Tell the clinician your goals and expectations for the rehearsal.

Discuss with the clinician if he or she prefers to conduct the band or if the Band director will need to conduct while the clinician makes comments.

If you plan to record any of the rehearsal with audio or video, be sure to check with the clinician ahead of time to make sure he or she is comfortable with being recorded.

Prepare students ahead of time for working cooperatively and respectfully with the clinician. Students

should be proficient with the parts but not set in their ways with tempos, phrasing, etc. You may want to assure your students that you've invited the clinician to work with them for their ongoing development and growth as individual performers and as a group.

Review rehearsal policies and procedures. Proper rehearsal atmosphere and attitude should be discussed prior to the clinician's visit. The only items permitted in the rehearsal area are items essential to a successful rehearsal. This does not include book bags, cell phones, iPods, tablets etc. Each student should have a pencil on his or her music stand and extra reeds, valve/slide oil, mutes, and any other required items in their immediate area.

Explain to the students ahead of time to try to do what the clinician asks, even if it is different from what they normally do.

Remain engaged and aware throughout the process. Feel free to walk around the room and make your presence known, especially if the students begin drifting. The clinician should not have to re-direct or re-focus students.

Logistics

Have the room set up and ready to start on time. Students should arrive early for the rehearsal. Post the music order before the rehearsal begins. All measures should be numbered (student parts and score). Any changes should be clearly marked on the score and the students' parts.

Have everyone prepared to make the most of the rehearsal time.

Make sure everyone has each piece to be rehearsed and has the correct part with all measures numbered. All solos should be assigned.

If electronics are to be used (Dr. Beat, speakers, document camera, projector, video, etc.), everything should be easily accessible; and a knowledgeable person should be on hand to operate these items.

During the clinic

Right at the beginning of the rehearsal, take a moment to introduce the clinician and welcome him or her. When the clinician comes into the room, provide a copy of the scores (if not done prior) and let him or her go to work.

Have water available for the clinician or anything else the clinician might need.

Once the rehearsal begins, do not interrupt the clinician or address the group unless asked to do so or unless there is some other compelling reason.

The director should stay in the room to learn from the clinician. Have a chair and music stand or sit at a nearby desk. Take notes and follow the score.

Don't be afraid to tell the students that this is to help you be a better Band Director as well as to help the students play better. If you show interest and attention, the students will, too. You want your students to experience a different approach and other conductors, but, in reality you are also bringing in

a guest conductor so that you can become a better educator. The director can often learn from others how to better balance and blend sounds to create that beautiful band sonority and to learn from others something new about the many facets of ensemble performance. You are striving to build your “bag of tricks.”

Monitor the students' behavior and attention level.

Be open-minded to suggestions and willing to try things that you may not have thought of doing.

Avoid making public excuses or apologies for the group's performance issues—although it’s okay to let the clinician know privately what the issues are, since every group can grow, which is why the clinician has been invited.

At the end of the rehearsal, allow the clinician to make concluding comments and remarks to the Band.

Thank the clinician with the group at the end of the rehearsal.

Walk the clinician out to his or her car or to an area he or she is familiar with to exit.

Present payment (or reiterate other payment method previously discussed and agreed upon).

After the clinic

Within a few days after the clinic, have a follow-up conversation with the clinician, either directly or by phone, to get ideas and suggestions for improving student performance. This is a good time to ask about any specific items of your own concern or interest.

The post-rehearsal debriefing with your group is critical to the learning process. Take time at your next rehearsal to review at least some fundamental items with the group. What did the clinician reinforce that they've heard before? What did the clinician say that was new? What went well? On an individual basis or on a group basis, what did they learn? What could have gone better? Were there rehearsal behavior issues that need to be addressed before the next clinician comes to visit?

Check with the clinician to see if it is ok for you to continue to make contact with him or her via e-mail, text, or phone so that he or she can continue to guide you through the process and help you achieve the personal growth necessary to achieve consistent success.

Respectfully Submitted,
D Tina Laferriere – committee chair
Mark Spreen
Ivan Wansley
Shawn Barat
PL Malcolm
George Shannon
Duane Hendon