



THE FIRST FIVE DAYS

FIVE SYSTEMS THAT WILL SHAPE YOUR ENTIRE YEAR

A BACK-TO-SCHOOL GIFT FROM EDUCATOR ENCOURAGER MICKEY SMITH JR.

1 DON'T TEACH PAGES. BUILD MUSICIANS.



Every page in a method book is simply a tool—not the goal. Your greatest success won't be measured by how quickly students progress through exercises, but by the confidence, habits, and musicianship they develop along the way. Build the student first, and the music will follow.

ASK YOURSELF: What habits do I want my students to leave with today?

2 BUILD CULTURE BEFORE CONTENT



Students don't remember the first note they played nearly as much as they remember how your classroom made them feel. Before introducing music, introduce your expectations, your routines, and the kind of community you're building together. A strong culture makes every rehearsal more productive because students know what success looks and sounds like.

REMEMBER: Students join your culture before they join your ensemble.

3 THEY A.R.E. AGENDAS • ROUTINES • EXPECTATIONS



Great classrooms rarely happen by accident. Clear agendas provide direction, consistent routines create confidence, and shared expectations establish accountability. When students know what to expect every day, they spend less energy figuring out the classroom and more energy making music.

CONSISTENCY CREATES CONFIDENCE.

4 I-AM FOUR QUESTIONS EVERY STUDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER



- What am I learning?
- Why am I learning it?
- How will I know I've learned it?
- What's coming next?

When students understand the purpose behind the lesson, they become participants in their own learning instead of simply following directions.

5 LEVELS AND LAYERS THE ANSWER TO TEACHING TOO MUCH, TOO FAST



Beginning musicians don't struggle because they're incapable—they struggle because we often ask them to learn too many new things at once. Break big concepts into manageable layers, celebrate small wins, and allow mastery to build one success at a time. Slow is smooth, and smooth becomes fast.

MASTER ONE LAYER BEFORE ADDING ANOTHER.

Reflection

WHAT EXPERIENCE DO I WANT EVERY STUDENT TO
REMEMBER AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL?

If they remember feeling seen, successful,
and excited to come back tomorrow, you've
already begun building something much
bigger than a concert program.



WHAT'S NEXT?

I CALL THESE "NEXT-ITS." BECAUSE I DON'T JUST WANT TO HELP YOU KNOW WHAT'S NEXT...
I WANT TO GIVE YOU THE NEXT-ITS THAT HELP YOU NOT EXIT THE PROFESSION.

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
THE FIRST FIVE DAYS	CULTURE RESET	REHEARSALS THAT BUILD INDEPENDENCE	PREPARING FOR PERFORMANCE WITHOUT BURNOUT	REFLECT BEFORE YOU REST	RESETTING MOMENTUM	STUDENT OWNERSHIP	KEEPING REHEARSALS ENGAGING	FINISHING STRONG	LEAVING A LEGACY
Five Systems That Will Shape Your Entire Year	How to strengthen routines before small problems become big ones.	Helping students think like musicians instead of waiting for directions.	Making concert season meaningful instead of overwhelming.	Celebrating progress and preparing for a strong second semester.	Helping students return with purpose after the break.	Creating musicians who lead themselves and each other.	Simple ways to increase participation and focus.	Maintaining excellence when motivation naturally begins to fade.	Helping students remember more than the music they performed.



ABOUT MICKEY

I'M THE EDUCATOR-ENCOURAGER.

By profession, I'm a full-time music educator. By calling, I encourage educators everywhere to Keep On Going.

Through music and message, I help educators move the needle from burnout to impact by creating experiences that inspire people to become who they're capable of becoming. Whether through keynotes, concerts, or professional learning, my goal is simple:

**TO MAKE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FEEL
MORE LIKE A PARTY THAN A PRESENTATION.**

Keep on going.

MICKEY SMITH JR.

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