

# Rehearsal Techniques for “Generation Z”

Beth Peterson, Associate Director of Bands,  
University of Illinois

1. Two things happened: *Millennials* or *Generation Z* /Ensemble experience (MUED)  
– the ‘democratization of the ensemble’ or constructivism.



2. How can a director rehearse his/her ensemble in a way that is more engaging, hands-on, collaborative, constructivist, and inclusive of all learners?

Rhythm first – clap it, count it, sing it, play it on same note (pick your favorite note – concert Bb), model it – don’t do it just by rote. But do remove notes.

Human metronome.

Time and number game. (E. Dan Long, Ann Arbor, MI)

Repetition is OK but not all the time. Tell them why you want to do it again. Sometimes you want to do it again for you. Give instructions when doing it again that make it more challenging each time (a form of ensemble differentiated instruction).

Name (or other personal identifier) game...



You are my sun- shine, my on- ly sun- shine. You make me hap- py when skies are gray,



You'll ne- ver know, dear, how much I love you, Please don't take my sun- shine a- way.

Isolate. This does many things. It lets a group (melody, woodwinds, clarinets, whomever) know they are important. It allows you to hear. It allows them to hear who plays what with whom. It gives others a break (chops). Isolate by instrument part or musical function. Deal with pacing – it's age appropriate. They can finger along. Listen and evaluate.

Ask them questions about what they hear: "What did you like about that?" or "trumpets, who has the melody at A?" followed by "how can that melody be shaped?" Tell a group to listen for something and then call on them to respond. Guide their answers musically. Ask, "Why did I do that?" It's also great to ask them to change their sound: Where percussion strike things, what mallets they use, how woodwinds tongue, what syllable works best for brass...

For Tone Quality, Air Support and pitch: Buzz, - 'wind pattern' - sing. This helps pitch and tone and air support by getting musicians to listen and focus the center of the sound. It's fun and different, productive and instrument specific.

Warm ups should apply. Do them every day but vary them so students aren't able to disengage. Rounds with Baseball...

White sheets.

Get off the podium and sit in a section, stand in front of the back row... move. They move too.

Person-of-the-week. Person of the week gets to pick warm up key, warm up rhythm, chorale for the day, model the passage, tell about self...

Soloists work together/small groups/sectionals

Be energetic and enthusiastic but 'be' in the character of the music as you rehearse.



Learn and teach about the composer: history, style, his/her contemporaries. Why was the piece written? Are there words, poetry or other influences for why the piece was created? Is the piece a transcription? Do any of these things relate to their other classes?

Longer term/Philosophy – What comprehensive musicianship activities can be used to rehearse/learn and appreciate the music? How are you teaching about music through playing it? Are you teaching the persons in the ensemble to be independent musicians? Can you connect anything 'extra-musical' about the piece (program notes) to their lives?

Talk Less. Smile More.