

The Saxophone:

Everything You ***NEED*** to Know
(and What You ***DON'T***)

CPE 38008 (1.0 hour) | Division: B

Saturday, February 14th, 2015

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Room CC 008

Clinician: Neil Dusseault, Private Music Instructor

Hand-out: www.neilsite.net/tmea

Objective:

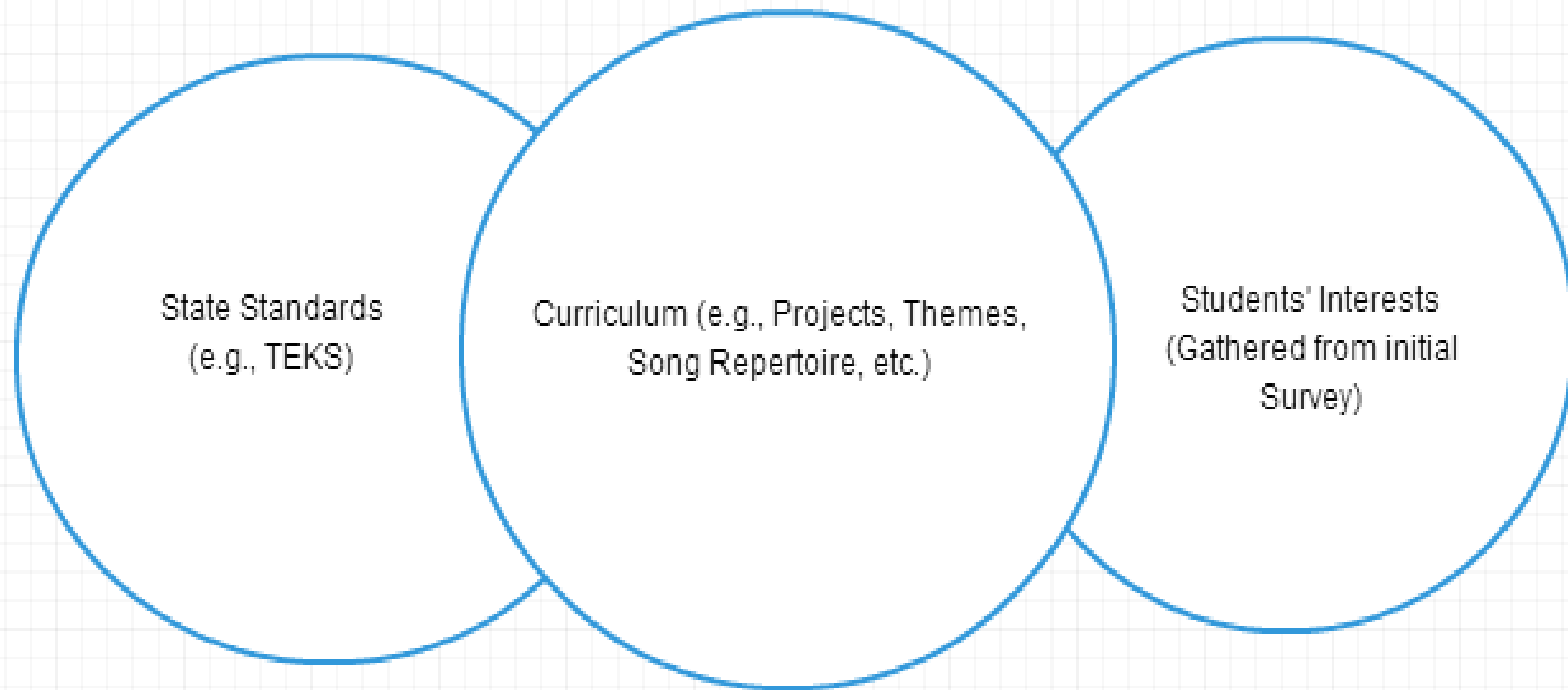
- ***“My goal is to create life-long learners, so you may always find time for practice and a place to perform great music.”***
- **(Taken from www.neilsite.net/lessons.html)**



Survey:

- **How many of you are saxophonists (as your principal instrument)?**
- **How many of you currently teach saxophonist(s)?**
- **How many of you plan on teaching saxophonist(s)?**
- **How many of you are private music instructors?**
- **Survey YOUR students:**
 - **At the beginning, middle, and end of each school year (as a recruitment strategy / retention technique)**

Venn Diagram:



Selection:

- **Allow the student to choose their instrument (NOT the band director!)**
- **Most students start on alto or tenor saxophone...**
- **Apply for grants! (e.g., Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, VH-1 Save the Music Foundation, etc.)**

The Brand

Identity/Supremacy/Ultimatum/Legacy:

- Many band directors direct students towards only the most expensive brands...bad for band's budget as well!
- Most 'student' model instruments are actually manufactured to be more durable than professional models
- Students simply need a working instrument to learn, practice, and build skills (e.g., embouchure muscles, breath control, articulating, dexterity in the fingers, intonation, and music literacy)
- Remember that inexpensive supplies are not inferior!

Supplies/Materials:

- Refer to The Woodwind & Brasswind: www.wwbw.com
- No gig-bags (unless they are hard-shell)
- Mouthpiece cap...
- Standard ligature in good working condition has one (and only one) function: To hold the reed in place!
- Rico or Rico Royal reeds, size 2: NOT 2 ½ !!! (Reed strengths should increase ½ size every 6 months to 1 year)
- Always keep at least two (2) reeds broken-in at all times—begin by soaking for 15 – 20 minutes the first day, 10 – 15 minutes the second, 5 – 10 minutes the third day, and from there on sucking on the reed as the first order of business during instrument assembly.

Supplies/Materials:

- Purchase a reed guard!
- Do NOT purchase Flavoreeds or a plastic reed, and avoid fancy ligatures like the plague!
- Rico Plasticover is great for more advanced students...
- Neck strap for alto, tenor, baritone saxophones (wear a collared shirt or buy the padded variety); bring instrument to YOU!
- Foldable music stand (great for travel, inexpensive, etc.)
- Sax stand w/optional pegs for other instruments...promotes practice!
- Mouthpiece-saver, Neck-saver, Pad-saver (by Shove-It), and/or swab cloth...do NOT purchase instrument care-kits!

Supplies / Materials:

- Polish cloth: Can be a clean, dry washcloth
- Cushion for right thumb-rest (leather or foam sleeve)
- Metronome & Tuner: Metronome from the first day you play; Tuning should be taught weeks later once the student can play long tones on at a least an octave range with good intonation.
- Key oil: Can literally be baby oil—use a Q-tip to apply directly onto the leather of a sticky pad...
- Cork grease: Apply daily to neck cork and neck-socket...main ingredient = beeswax (same as Chap-Stick, yes, the two ARE interchangeable)
- Use a book light (has a clip to hold music on stand)
- Purchase mini-screwdriver set...

Reeds, Mouthpieces, & The Advanced Saxophonist:

- Encourage (or at least allow) advanced students to 'test-drive' various brands & sizes of mouthpieces to determine what works for them in order to achieve their desired sound
- Go to a reed camp by Rico or Vandoren!
- Reeds are made of bamboo cane (a variety of wood = no two will be the same) and are in fact approx. \$2 disposable but necessary for vibration...
- Visit the web site (or read the CD-liner jacket/sleeve) to determine the overall set-up of your favorite saxophonist!

Common Sense / General Knowledge:

- Hold the saxophone off to the right side for tenor and baritone saxophones only (and do NOT tilt your neck!)
- Take all breaths through the nose...
- Watch out for 'pointy' fingers...
- No cheek muscles should be used (diaphragm instead)
- 'Suck-in' moisture that is making a gurgling sound...
- Sight-reading 101: Check title, tempo, key signature, meter, & dynamic level before you play...
- Practice is like an experiment lab: Work on only the challenging sections, one phrase at a time chunking-out the motive(s) one beat at a time if necessary, then connect them!



An example of what NOT to do...

Articulating Rhythms: Kodály Method

- Please refer to my web site for this hand-out:
- www.neilsite.net/tmea
- (It is a .pdf)
- This chart is NOT exhaustive of all rhythms; however, it does accomplish two goals with one task:
- Using this method, you are articulating rhythms (as you should be) for specific durations—therefore, you do NOT have to count as you will NEVER be off the beat!
- ‘Sizzle’ rhythms before playing: If you cannot chant out the rhythms while singing their pitches, then you will not be able to play them...Remember: If you can't say it, then you can't play it!" (Better to do this with a metronome)

Beginning Band Warm-up/Cool-down Repertoire:

- Please refer to the hand-out on web site for these exercises...
- www.neilsite.net/tmea
- This is intended for novice students (at least 1 month of experience)
- Each exercise teaches / reinforces a different skill thereby focusing on certain muscles (e.g., embouchure, finger dexterity, diaphragm on long tones, etc.)
- Remember to use a metronome & tap your foot!

Daily Articulation Exercises:

- Please refer to my web site to download the .pdf (Vol. I & Vol. II)
- www.neilsite.net/tmea
- Each practice routine should include some kind of articulation exercise, thereby working out the tongue (which is a muscle) in order to play various rhythmic durations with ease.
- Remember to play with a metronome & tap your foot!

Advanced Band Warm-up/Cool-down Repertoire:

- Please refer to my website to download the .pdf
- www.neilsite.net/tmea
- This version includes many types of scales in addition to more challenging versions of the exercises from Beginning Band...



Major Scales and Arpeggios:

- Once your student(s) are playing songs other than in Concert B-flat Major, then they should play the Major Scale w/Arpeggios in the key of the song just prior to playing the song...
- Using the picture of the Circle of 5ths really helps students to identify what key a song is in by looking at its key signature.
- More advanced students should practice ALL 12 Major scales & arpeggios on a regular basis to be comfortable in any key.
- Remember to visit my web site for the .pdf of this hand-out:
- www.neilsite.net/tmea

Chromatic Scale:

- Once the student can 'comfortably' play the written range of the saxophone (from low B-flat to high-F) then this should also be practiced daily, so as to maintain embouchure muscles, etc.
- I try to ascend the entire range in one breath, then descend in another breath, which exercises control of the embouchure in multiple registers.
- This exercise can also be found on my web site at:
- www.neilsite.net/tmea

Daily Tuning Exercise:

- After instrument assembly, you should first get some warm air in your instrument (to make sure everything works BEFORE you officially start practicing exercises or playing songs).
- Tuning should only be done when it is silent (not when others are assembling their instruments), and do NOT mark your neck cork with a pen!
- Once you tune one note, you may notice that a note much higher or lower is 'out of tune' thereby realizing that not all notes are created equal!
- For higher notes, keep firm lip pressure; for lower notes, use an "aw" or u-shaped embouchure; If you're sharp, loosen your lower-lip pressure, and if you're flat, tighten lower lip pressure.

Recommended Methods Books:

- Although they all claim to be 'comprehensive', no one set of Book 1 (Beginner), Book 2 (Intermediate), or Book 3 (Advanced) will give you everything you need.
- Many of the songs tend to be same, just arranged differently.
- Therefore, I custom-create all warm-up/cool-down exercises and select songs from each book that teach a new concept AND is either fun and/or familiar...I use ***Finale!*** and once a file has been created with several songs for trumpet from book 1, I can easily transpose that to saxophone, flute, etc. and my students never need to actually buy these books.

Recommended Methods Books:

- Ed Sueta Band Method (by Macie Publishers)
- Premier Performance (by Macie Publishers)
- Standard of Excellence (by Bruce Pearson, Neil A. Kjos Publishers)
- Tradition of Excellence (by Bruce Pearson, Neil A. Kjos Publishers)
- Essential Elements (by John Higgins, Tim Lautzenheiser, et.)
- Use accompaniment CD/play-along (audio) files!

Saxophonists:

A Different Kind of Student!

- Your average sax player in band (or taking lessons) is most likely not in this gig to play UIL contest music or pretty much anything from the Prescribed Music List...
- They are more inclined to want to learn to play more iconic songs for saxophone (e.g., *Careless Whisper*, *The Pink Panther*, *Take Five*, *Pick Up the Pieces*, *Shotgun*, *Baker Street*, etc.), or songs from a well-known saxophonist (e.g., Kenny G, Dave Koz, Candy Dulfer, Mindi Abair, etc.).
- Solution: Remember to ASK what they hope to get out of this! Perhaps allow solos etc. during concerts or arrange pop songs, or transpose the trumpet parts (often the melody) for sax!

Advanced Techniques:

- **Intonation:** The best way to improve tone quality is by practicing long tones, so as to focus on sustaining a single pitch for long durations without wavering the sound (inadvertently) with your embouchure...Try recording yourself and if you are not satisfied with your sound then play the piece again and tweak your embouchure placement to the desired effect.
- **Vibrato:** Should be used on long tones so 'sweeten' the intonation...Beginners should wait only until they can play long tones without (inadvertently) wavering the sound with their embouchure. Two kinds: 1) Diaphragm vibrato and 2) Lip/Jaw vibrato. Each beat should be pulsed out in Tri-pl-ets so as not to lose time.

Advanced Techniques (cont.)

- **Flutter-tongue:** Mostly for jazz, rock, pep band, etc. Place your embouchure closer to the tip and while playing a note (not high or low), roll your tongue like a Spanish R.
- **Altissimo Register:** Pieces from a variety of genres call for this extended upper range of pitches...best to go online and search for an altissimo finger chart for alto or tenor (not soprano or baritone as the altissimo register is not easily recognized on these instruments). Practice with a very firm lower lip and plenty of fast air!
- Search: *Ted Nash's Studies In High Harmonics for Tenor and Alto Saxophone*

Circular Breathing:

- Definitely an advanced technique that is doable and if it is to be learned, then like any skill you do not want to wait too long to get started!
- Buy: *Circular Breathing For The Wind Performer* (by Trent P. Kynaston)
- Circular breathing is best used in sight-reading when you have to play music you are unfamiliar with on the spot, therefore you have not had time to play through and determine all the appropriate places a breath mark should exist, especially if you have little to no rests and quicker rhythms, etc.
- The circular breath allows you to take that much needed breath without chopping up the phrase by breaking the continuity of sound to take a breath.

Circular Breathing (cont.)

- Check out my web site for a copy of *Daily Exercise No. 1* (by H. Klosé), available as a .pdf
- www.neilsite.net/tmea
- This is a good example of a piece that could be used to employ a circular breath or two in the middle and towards the end...
- Please keep in mind that all sight-reading skills are best improved with chamber settings—playing music arranged for a small ensemble—this exposes the student to various genres which each represents different rhythmic and melodic patterns...so get students in on private lessons with me today!

Questions?

