

2022 Texas Music Educators Association Convention

Simple Steps to Successful Beginning Percussion

Kennan Wylie

Friday, February 11, 2022, 2:30pm

Stars at Night Ballroom 1-2

San Antonio Convention Center, San Antonio, TX

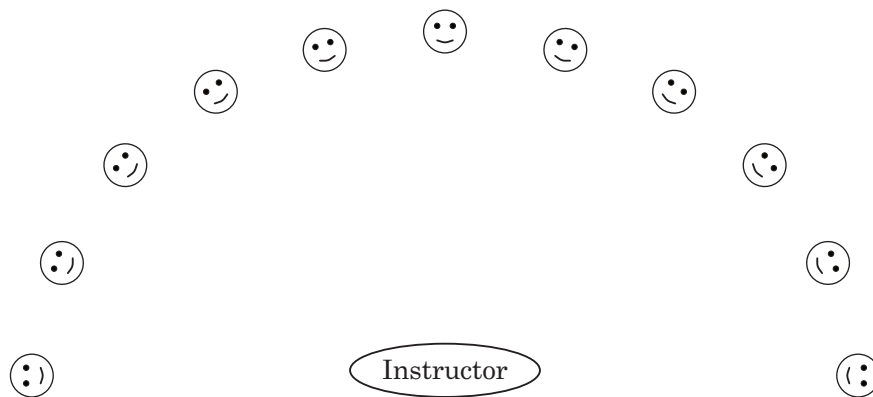
Simple Steps to Teaching Successful Beginning Percussion

I. Selecting the Beginning Percussionists

Everyone wants to play the DRUMS! Well, let the student know right off the bat that this is PERCUSSION class and they will be responsible for learning ALL of the percussion instruments. The Director may even wish to name and show the student various percussion instruments. This may quickly eliminate the “drummer only” syndrome. I would emphasize that the parent(s) be present to also hear your interview with their child. While many band directors emphasize or require keyboard experience, **I would strongly urge to use caution in this area.** Try to allow time during the screening process for some basic playing and observe the student’s coordination and rhythm.

II. Classroom setup

An ideal situation would include the student each having a practice pad/drum and a bell kit along with sticks, mallets, and metronome. The availability of “real” percussion instruments will vary from school to school. Perhaps the band director will give the percussion class an occasional opportunity to practice in the band hall and have easy access to the instruments from time to time. The arrangement of instruments and students in the classroom will vary depending on the instruction. I generally use a half-circle arrangement so the kids can face me with their instrument. Perhaps try placing a snare drum (when engaged in snare instruction) on one end and have the kids rotate so that each student gets a chance to play on the “real” drum. This can easily be done with a xylophone or marimba when studying keyboards.



III. General Considerations

Extra Percussion Time

It is not uncommon for the average percussionist to find themselves bored and unchallenged with the initial stages of development. This is especially true when there is a heterogeneous music classroom approach. The only way to avoid this situation is the addition of an extra meeting time (sectional) for training the young percussionist. Separate percussion meetings should have priority over other sectionals due to the aspect of their techniques, problems with various instruments, and learning to organize their equipment. Maybe a private lesson teacher or qualified percussion teacher can come in occasionally and work the sectional.

Motivating the Young Percussionist

The biggest factor here is the director’s basic attitude toward the percussion section. The director can convey a positive approach by doing simple things like scheduling percussion sectionals which conveys a sincere concern for their contribution. Also something as easy as referring to the students as “percussionists” and not “drummers” helps establish a more professional relationship and atmosphere.

IV. The Game Plan

Every teacher needs an effective “**game plan**” for successful results. In percussion education, this plan will include items such as:

- When to start snare drum?
- When to start keyboards?
- When to introduce rhythms?
- When to start rolls?
- When to introduce timpani?
- How many rudiments should be covered?

...and so many more decisions.

The best way to answer these questions is to determine what expectations you have for your percussionist by the end of their first year. A successful game plan can help you achieve these expectations. The selection of curriculum will also play a vital role in helping your students meet these goals.

I will share some of my first-year goals and the basic plan I used to help my students achieve these goals.

V. What to do – Year 1 beginning percussion

Snare Drum

- Basic understanding of grip, hand position, and stroke.
- Produce appropriate rebound stroke / controlled stroke (down, tap, up)
- Demonstrate 14 warmups that will cover essential techniques including singles, doubles, accents, flams, paradiddles.
- Proficiently perform basic rhythms including quarter note/rest, half note/rest, whole note/rest, dotted notes, 8th note/rest, 16th note/rest, 8th/16th note triplet while counting aloud, and foot tap
- Basic understanding of cut time / odd meter.

Keyboards

- Basic understanding of grip, hand position, and stroke.
- Produce appropriate stroke
- Understanding of all tetrachords / major scales
- Proficient keyboard identification – Low F up 2.5 octaves
- Proficient treble clef staff identification – Low F up 2.5 octaves

Timpani

- Basic bass clef identification
- Produce appropriate stroke
- Understanding of hand position, technique, beating area
- Knowledge of drum ranges / proficiently tune drum

Accessory Instruments

- Basic knowledge / technique for bass drum
- Basic knowledge / technique for crash cymbals and suspended cymbal
- Basic knowledge / technique for tambourine
- Basic knowledge / technique for triangle

Latin Percussion Instruments

- Basic knowledge / technique for bongos / congas
- Basic knowledge / technique for claves / maracas
- Basic knowledge / technique for guiro / cowbell
- Basic knowledge / technique for timbales

Drum set

- Basic knowledge of set-up
- Basic knowledge of foot technique for bass drum and hi hat
- Basic coordination skills for fundamental rock, jazz and latin patterns

VI. How to do it – Year 1 beginning percussion

Select a curriculum that will allow the best results to be achieved, not necessarily the quickest or easiest. Choose one that feels comfortable to you. Select one that has flexibility and options for you to help you reach your desired goals. Also keep in mind the musical value of the selected curriculum. Appropriate literature even at the beginning level can greatly impact a young percussionist's musicianship.

The “accountability” factor can also be another big key. In other words, once new concepts are taught/introduced they should be included throughout the year. This tends to make the student more “accountable” about what they have learned.

Another consideration is having beginning percussion students perform a solo and/or ensemble for a performance. What a great tool to continue their development in specific areas. Also, use any potential beginner band music to help teach accessory instruments as well as keyboard training. These types of opportunities are very useful and can give students a “break” from their daily curriculum while still learning.

In closing, whatever “game plan” you design for your students, try to stick with it and give it time. Adjustment can be made throughout the process or from year to year. Provide realistic goals that will benefit your percussionists as well as your band program. Best of luck!

VII. When to do What – Year 1 beginning percussion

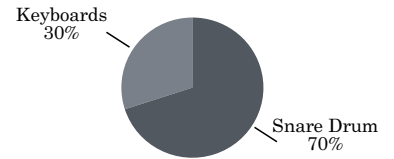
Consider sketching out a monthly plan with some weekly goals. This may take some time to develop the timing of what works for you in your situation. For example, what might work for someone who sees their students five times a week might not be the same for those who see their students three times a week. Adjustments will have to be made. Here is a sample of Mr. Wylie's plan for the first semester (18 weeks) and second semester (18 weeks) of school. Notice the graphs help illustrate the percentages.

All music examples included in this handout are from:
“Simple Steps to Successful Beginning Percussion”

August

Keyboard

- Basic music theory instruction – staff, clef, measure, bar lines, accidentals, naturals, sharps, flats, etc.
- Use MusicTheory.net to learn note recognition and staff identification.
- Tape over any marked notes on the keys.



Snare Drum

Concentrate only on the basic rebound stroke. We will do this on the pad only. This legato stroke will be the most universal stroke that we can apply to every percussion instrument. 8 on a hand, paradiddle / 8th note combinations. Introduction of basic rhythm: quarter note/rest, half note/rest, whole note/rest, 8th note/rest, dotted quarter note.

Ex. 1 – Step #2

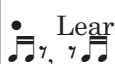


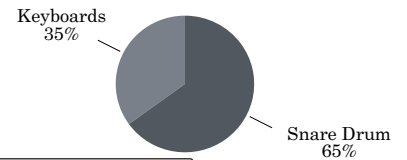
Ex. 2 – Step #4



September to Mid-October

Snare Drum

- Develop 16th note flow, using the same rebound stroke.
- Learn some basic 16th note rhythms: ,
- Introduction of dynamics (height system).



Ex. 3 – Step #7



Ex. 4 – Step #2a



Ex. 5 – Step #4a



Ex. 6 – Checkpoint A / A1



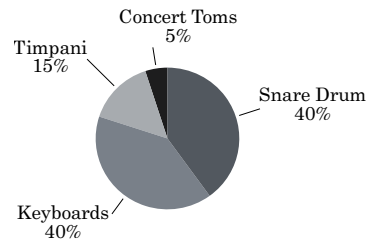
Keyboard

- Basic stroke/technique
- Tetrachords
- Start melodic reading (middle C, D, E, F, G) using only rhythms covered in August.
- Combine Tetrachords for major scale - add C and F major scale.

Ensemble

- Combine snare drum and keyboard exercises.
- Utilize “real” snare drum and mallet instruments - marimba, xylo, vibes, etc.
- Start to discuss blend, balance, and other ensemble issues.

Mid-October to Mid-December



Snare Drum

- Develop the double bounce (“Two for One stroke”)
- Add 5, 7, 9, 13, and 17 stroke rolls.
- Introduce buzz roll
- No new rhythms during this period.

Keyboard

- Add new notes B \flat , E \flat , and upper A \flat .
- Add B \flat and E \flat major scales.
- Basic keyboard exercises.
- Add rolls.
- Add upper octave A, B \flat , and C

Timpani

- Introduction of instrument, stroke, grip, technique, etc.
- Basic exercises utilizing 2 and 3 drums.

Concert Toms

- How to set up, read notation.
- Reinforce buzz roll training.

Ensemble

- Combine snare drum, keyboard, and timpani.
- Prepare concert music if necessary (add accessories if applicable).
- More ensemble techniques - watching conductor, etc.

Ex. 7 – Step #12



Ex. 8 – Checkpoint B1



Ex. 9 – Step #11 / #11a



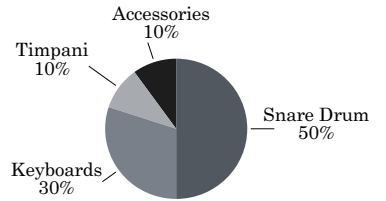
Ex. 10 – Step #14 / #14a



Ex. 11 – Checkpoint C1



Mid-December to Mid-January



Snare Drum

- Introduce the “controlled stroke” (tap stroke, up stroke, etc.)
- Single hand accent exercises.
- Alternating hand accent exercises
- Develop the flam rudiments (flam paradiddle, flam accent, flamacue, and flam tap)
- No new rhythms during this period.

Accessory Instruments

- Crash cymbals, suspended cymbal
- Concert bass drum
- Triangle, wood block
- Tambourine


Ensemble

- Combine all learned instruments in musical selections.

Keyboard

- Reinforce learned techniques.
- Add A \flat and D \flat major scales.
- Add chromatic scale.

Ex. 12 – Step #15 / #15a

4 

Crash Cymbals

Ex. 13 – Step #16 / #16a

6 

Cr. Cym.

The first system of the musical score is for the first voice. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts on a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. This is followed by a half note C5, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The melody then descends: a half note D5, a half note C5, a half note B4, and a half note A4. The system ends with a double bar line.

Ex. 14 – Step #17 / #17a

6

R R L R L R L R R L R L R L R R R R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

6

Wood Block

Ex. 15 – Step #18 / #18a

[illegible]

8.

Ex. 16 – Step #18a

♩ = 65-75

I **Tambourine** **Temple Blocks**

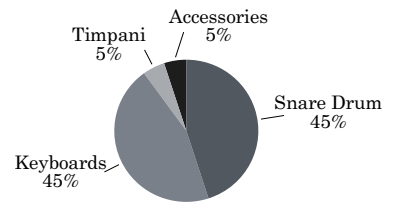
II **Triangle** **Suspended Cymbal**

5

I **II**

sfz (muffle)

Mid-January to March



Ex. 17 – Checkpoint D

Hard Rock Tempo Rock-N-Roll K. Wylie

stick click

5

mp

To Coda

9

Snare Drum

- Prepare snare drum solo for performance
- Lots of reading.

Ex. 18 – Checkpoint D1

Hunter's Chorus

Von Weber
arr. K. Wylie

$\text{♩} = 84-90$

f

4

5

mp

8

To Coda

9

mf

12

14

f

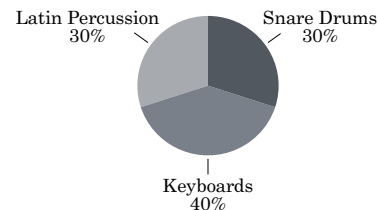
Keyboard

- Prepare keyboard solo for performance
- Lots of reading
- All seven major scales, 2 octaves.

Ensemble

- Combination of both solos (with and without audio file)
- Balance, blend, listening, melody, accompaniment, etc.

March through April



Snare Drum

- Add more 16th note based rhythms to existing package
- Introduction to 8th note and 16th note triplet.

Ex. 19 – Step #22



Latin Percussion Instruments

- Bongos, cowbell, shakers, maracas
- Congas, claves
- Guiro, timbales
- Castanets

Ex. 20 – Step #22a



Ex. 21 – Checkpoint E1



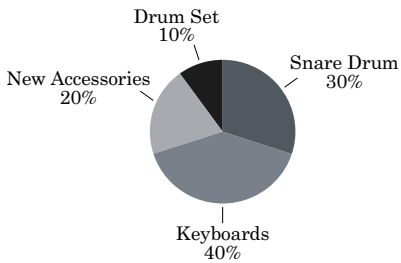
Ensemble

- Fun tunes with Latin percussion instruments and keyboards and snare drum.
- Start percussion ensemble piece.

Keyboard

- More reading

End of April through May



Snare Drum

- “Cut-time” rhythm
- “8” time reading (reinforce buzz rolls)

Accessory Instruments

- Ratchet, sleigh bells, wind chimes, whip crack
- Gongs, finger cymbals, crotales

Ensemble

- Fun tunes with accessory instruments, keyboards, and snare drum.
- Work on band music and percussion ensemble.

Drum set

- Introduction to drum set.
- Basic rock, jazz, and Latin beats.

Keyboard

- More reading

Ex. 22 – Step #24



Ex. 23 – Step #25



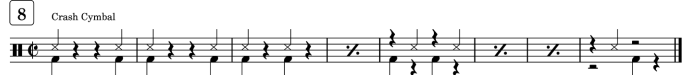
Ex. 24 – Step #23 / #23a



Ex. 25 – Step #23 / #23a



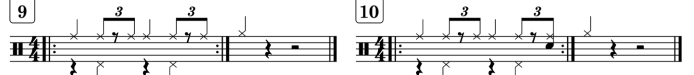
Ex. 26 – Step #24a



Ex. 27 – Step #25a



Ex. 28 – Step #25a



Mr. Wylie's helpful hints

1. Keep it simple

Try not to over analyze beginning Percussion. Use your ears and common sense and you will be fine. Percussion is NOT rocket science! Avoid “over-thinking” the process of teaching beginning percussionists.

2. More play, less talk

Keep your class moving by playing more than talking. Kids want to play, not listen to me ramble.

3. Listen to each student individually daily

Try to listen to each student play by themselves daily. For example, choose a warm up and go down the line. This will help you as much as it will help the student. Peer and self-evaluation is invaluable.

4. Count aloud / Tap foot

One of the best ways to develop a stronger sense of pulse. If you can count it, you understand it, and you can play what you understand.

5. Be relentless on warmups

Every day of every week of every month rep the warm-ups! The music will only sound as good as the warm-ups.

6. Metronome ALL the time

Sounds like a no-brainer, but many educators are not consistent with usage.

7. Percussion is visual

What you see is what you hear. Sticks too high, sticks too low, not striking in the middle of drum, beating spots on bar, timpani, etc.

8. "Air Drumming"

One of the best ways to evaluate student counting is to have the student count aloud while “drumming” in the air. This concept also works well when playing keyboards by having the students name the notes aloud while playing in the air.

9. Be careful of uniformity

Having all students look the same is a great goal, but not the most important goal. The muscles of young students develop at different rates and may cause some variations of the intended technique. Nothing wrong with a pinky hanging off, or maybe a slightly too open fulcrum, or even a slight awkward stick angle.

10. Be patient and stay the course

It is going to sound bad before it sounds good. Not getting immediate results should not deter you from your long term goals. Be patient, repetitive, consistent, and results will eventually occur.

All music examples included in this handout are from:
“Simple Steps to Successful Beginning Percussion”

For more info come by our TMEA Booth #1259
or visit our website at www.kwylie.com.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Brook Mays Music Company
Innovative Percussion
Zildjian Cymbals
Yamaha Percussion
Evans Drumheads

Robby Poole – editing assistance

Brandon Kelly and Bill Bachman – Private Percussion Instructors

Kevin Graham and Brittany Rupp – Briarhill M.S. Band Directors

Mary Clardy – Downing M.S. Band Director

Joshua Duermeyer and Matthew Ball – Lamar M.S. Band Directors

All of the Briarhill, Downing, and Lamar M.S. percussion Moms and Dads

Special Acknowledgments to the L.I.S.D.

Amanda Drinkwater, Supervisor of Fine Arts

Will Skelton, Principal, Marcus High School

Kristy Casal, Principal, Lamar Middle School

Curtis Martin, Principal Downing Middle School

Leslie Davenport, Principal Briarhill Middle School

Jeffrey D. Jones, Head Band Director, Marcus High School

Nick VandenBush, Asst. Band Director, Marcus High School

Logan Stalcup, Asst. Band Director, Marcus High School