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Reopening Suggestions and Recommendations for Music Educators

*Companion document to
"Reopening Solutions and
Recommendations for Music
Education in Vermont"*

C19ART AND VMEA

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COVID-19 ADVOCACY RESPONSE TEAM

The Covid-19 Advocacy Response Team (C19ART) included 14 music educators from around Vermont, who represented PK-12 instruction in general, instrumental, choral, and musical theater. The C19 ART was created to develop strategies, plans, and solutions needed for music education to continue in these unprecedented times. The recommendations from this Team address many ways to teach music with the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff as top priority. Updates to these recommendations will be made pending further release of research-based, scientific studies relating to music education.

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Purpose of Document

These are recommendations created from the study of many sources. This resource does not purport to replace or contradict the guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control(CDC), VT AOE, local SUs, or schools regarding the timing or protocols for how schools should operate.

The purpose of this document is to present solutions to the challenges Covid-19 presents for music education. These solutions are intended to help administrators and teachers make scheduling and programming decisions that will maintain quality music education for all students in a healthy and safe environment. For more detailed information for teachers, see "Reopening Suggestions and Recommendations for Vermont Music Educators".

Music Education encompasses more than just musical performance, as outlined in the 2014 National Music Standards on which most state music standards are based. Standards-based music instruction, focused on the artistic processes of creating, performing, responding and connecting to music, can occur regardless of how music is taught this fall. In addition, high quality, content-valid music assessments can be conducted virtually, allowing music educators and their administrators to understand the progress of students in meeting state music standards regardless of how instruction is delivered this school year.

Step 1 - All-remote learning. Teachers and students should be equipped with adequate and functional technology relating to music.

Step 2 - A hybrid model of teaching should be divided between primary (in-person) instruction and extension (remote) instruction.

Step 3 - Face to face teaching with modifications. Teachers and students should have access to adequate and appropriately functional technology to broadcast instruction to socially distanced students (screens for projection of instructional materials/music, speakers to project accompaniment, microphones, 1:1 devices to prevent sharing of materials).

GENERAL STATEMENT OF ADVOCACY

It is imperative that all students have access to an equitable delivery of arts education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts that supports their educational, social, and emotional well-being, taught by certified professional arts educators in partnership with community arts providers.

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Music and SEL

There is a wealth of research relating to the impact and correlation of music education with cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well being. During this unprecedented time, we encourage reflection on key aspects that can help us move forward in a safe, helpful way, keeping in mind the overall wellness and growth of all our students and work force. The emerging research in trauma, the power of resiliency, the importance of relationships, sense of belonging, competence, and autonomy can help guide us in a direction that will set the stage for meaningful education now and in the future. In this section, we want to highlight some of the most important research we have come across in relation to the cognitive, social-emotional and physical growth with music education.

We believe music educators can be central to reestablishing safe, welcoming, trauma informed schools and the processing of the experiences we've all shared.

Key Findings:

- Music education helps develop transferable skills.
- Music has a profound impact on relationships through safe risk taking, emotional content, shared celebrations, and long term healthy adult relationships in school settings.
- Music education supports executive functioning skills.
- Of paramount importance during times of stress is our ability to regulate both physiologically and emotionally. Music performance has been shown to correlate with the enhanced development of both types of regulation.
- Music is an expressive medium, and through its study and performance, students develop ways to identify and articulate their own emotions.
- The development of intrinsic motivation is often considered a critical factor in long term success and contribution to society and personal growth. There is a wealth of research that suggests music helps us develop the three major drivers of intrinsic motivation, sense of belonging, competence, and autonomy.

Music and SEL

What Music Education and SEL looks like in the classroom:
(using <https://selarts.org/> as a guide)

CREATE: Students compose an original song that expresses an emotion they identify- the lyrics as well as the musical accompaniment reflect the emotion they wish to express, using descriptive language and demonstrating an understanding of elements of music including tonality, melody, rhythm, form (elementary- high school students).

PERFORM: Students participate in a drum circle, performing rhythms from basic to complex, using critical skills like listening to and watching other performers, and non-verbal communication to maintain a group ensemble groove. Modifications to the drum circle for physical distancing and health considerations include all students sitting in a straight line, and may be using “found instruments” like desk tops, chairs, pencils, and other classroom items (elementary- high school students).

RESPOND: Students listen to musical works composed throughout history during times of plague and pandemic, and compare songs from hundreds of years ago to music being written now. Students demonstrate understanding of how musicians have used the elements of music to process tragedy and hope during times of great historical change (upper elementary- high school students).

CONNECT: Students read *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss, a book relating emotions to colors. Students listen to pieces of expressive music and use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to draw the emotions they hear in the music (elementary students).

Equity

Access to Technology

- If technology is required for music participation in the public school, it must be provided by the school.
- Advocate for programs that support remote internet access for students.
- If access to technology is not guaranteed by the school, remote teaching without technology must be provided.

Access to a safe place to sing or play

- Some students may not have access to a safe place at home in which to sing or play and/or record assignments.
- Consider developing a safe place on campus for recording/practicing for students to access.

PK-12 Google Suit Tool for Music Education

Google Based composition platform: [Flat.io](https://flat.io)

- Integrated with Google Classroom.
 - Allows students to collaborate with their peers.
 - Allows teachers to assess and is linked to Google Gradebook.
- Optimal age group, Grades 3 - 12.
- Asynchronous and synchronous platform.
- Hybrid or in-person while encouraging independent work.
- Extended learning through use of midi-keyboards and/or Google-based, Soundtrap.com, digital composition platform.

Health

- Hold outdoor rehearsals whenever possible.
- Existing HVAC systems should be fitted with HEPA filters if possible.
- Use portable air scrubber HEPA filtration system appropriate to the size of the room.
- Use fans to move air up if the ceiling height is too low.
- Hand sanitizer, antiseptic wipes, extra face coverings are available for student/staff use at all times.
- Staff members must demonstrate and model appropriate safety precautions at all times. This includes wearing masks, hand cleaning and distancing.
 - Training and proper PPE must be provided to those who are responsible for cleaning.
 - Split masks for wind instrumentalists; cover bells with cloth coverings (masks).
- Sanitize shared items: instruments, chairs, stands, etc.
- Maintaining low conversational voices is important. Teachers should use a portable amplifier.

Large Ensembles

Instrumental

Grades PK-3

- Utilize non-wind instruments, such as string/ukulele/percussion, to create cohort-based ensembles.
 - All students would sanitize or wash hands before and after touching an instrument.
 - All Instruments would be properly sanitized between student uses.

Grades 4-8

- Small Chamber Groups that are cohort-based.
 - Rehearse outside or using safely distanced and filtered space.
 - Allow for 6-9 ft. distancing between students.
 - Do not use spit valves or "blow" excess condensation in rehearsal space.
 - Use alternative space/room for emptying spit valves into containers. No music sharing/touching (music could be used as PDFs on iPads).
 - Shortened, 30-45 minute rehearsal times.
 - Masks worn by all students. Use split masks for Brass and Woodwind.
 - Brass and Woodwind players cover bells with cloth coverings (masks!).

Grades 9-12

- Students should sit facing in the same direction.
- Seating should be based on social distancing and aerosols study guidelines. Measure classrooms to determine the best setup for each class to adhere to social distancing requirements.
 - 6' distance in all directions between students, except trombones which need 9' in front of them and 6' to each side.
 - Create a template of the desired length that will meet CDC, state and local guidelines for social distancing, and mark spaces on your floor where chairs and stands will be placed.
- Use of bell covers (those made of multi-layered denier nylon being the best choice) for wind instruments.
- Prepare for how materials such as instruments, sheet music, and stands are used. Proper planning can help reduce person to person contact outside of the recommended social distancing.
- Water keys (spit valves) should not be emptied on the floor.
 - Possibly provide central "condensation" dumpsites. Use buckets containing an alcohol solution or provide personal sterilization materials as necessary for brass players to deal with water disposal.
- Mop tile floors regularly with an alcohol-based solution. Regularly disinfect any carpeted areas as necessary.
- Percussionists must use personal or assigned mallets and sticks. No sharing. Fresh gloves should be used if percussionists must share equipment. Bass drum, gong, chime mallets, etc. must be cleaned after each use.
- Sharing of instruments should not be allowed.
- String, percussion, and keyboard instruments present fewer hygienic issues that can be solved simply by the player washing their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Isopropyl alcohol that's above 70% should only be used on the strings and unfinished finger and fret boards

Large Ensembles

Choral

- Masks worn by all students and teachers for choral rehearsals and performances.
- Seating should be based on physical distancing and aerosol study guidelines.

Grades PK-3

- Students should rehearse/perform in the established cohort grouping.
- Rote teaching to eliminate the need for any music distribution.
- Each cohort could rehearse in an outdoor or safely filtered and sized space.
 - Allow for 6-9 ft. distancing between students.

Grades 4-8

- Small group rehearsals in an outdoor or safely filtered and sized space.
 - Allow for 6-9 ft. distancing between students.
- Rehearsal recordings of songs could be distributed digitally for individual practice.
- No music sharing, use electronic pdf copies if possible.
- Shortened, 30-45 minute rehearsal times.

Grades 9-12

- Repertoire selections for the entire in-person group may not be appropriate for divided ensemble success
- For developing choirs, consider repertoire that encourages successful part singing and flexibility of parts to include:
 - Partner Songs
 - Ostinato Songs
 - Canons
- Consider the reduction of divisi assignments for more efficient rehearsal and support of singers.
- Consider the selection of some repertoire with digital teaching resources already available.
- Substitute recordings of singers from the ensemble singing parts for rehearsal tracks rather than exclusively using professional recordings and/or accompaniment only recordings.
- Engage in small group rehearsals/sectionals via video conferencing (student or teacher led) to continue to build community and collaboration within the ensemble.
- When possible, consider humming to rehearse music.

AUDIO EQUIPMENT FOR RECORDING AND PLAYBACK FOR CHORAL MUSIC

- Secure an ample amount of equipment to use recorded teaching resources in multiple places without the need for multiple keyboards.
- If needed, secure part/accompaniment tracks to assist singers.
- Substitute recordings of singers from the ensemble singing parts for rehearsal tracks rather than exclusively using professional recordings and/or accompaniment only recordings.

Performances

With proper licensing and photo/video waivers, digital performances can be created. Performances by each cohort or small ensemble could be recorded and compiled to create a virtual concert. Socially-distanced outdoor Drive-In Concert could be used.

Step 1

- Teacher creates fully remote lessons that teach the musical elements of a piece of music.
- Teacher creates practice tracks for students to rehearse at home. Students submit their instrumental or vocal tracks for editing.

Step 2/Step 3

- Teachers meet with their cohort of students and teach the non-performance elements of a piece of music (style, culture, composer's intent, etc).
- Teacher creates practice tracks for students to rehearse at home. Students submit their instrumental or vocal track for editing. From these tracks, digital performances can be created as detailed in Step 1. In the music room, percussion and string instruments could be played by students and sanitized between cohorts. Students could perform as an ensemble and livestream the performance to the school community.

Professional Development

Music educators will need time and resources in order to successfully adapt instructional strategies for the various courses and content they teach.

Professional development is needed for the following:

- Focusing on technology for instruction, developing skills to best utilize instructional tools is vital.
- Editing music/videos- practice time is needed to learn iMovie, Pro Tools, Logic, and other editing software.
- Learning music platforms, learning management systems, and their use
- PK-12 Google Suite Tool for Music Education - Google based composition platform: [Flat.io](https://flat.io)

PK-8

SCHEDULING

Music education can and should occur in all scheduling models. Scheduling should be coordinated so that synchronous or asynchronous music instruction/learning does not conflict with other subjects during the school day. Participation in music should be required for all students, regardless of scheduling model. Engage in Project-Based Learning with classroom teachers to provide students with rigorous cross-curricular learning opportunities.

Step 1

- See or have contact remotely with all students over the course of the week.
- Music participation should be required for all students. Accommodations for students with IEPs, learning disabilities, lack of reliable internet connection, etc. should be made on an individual basis.

Step 2/Step 3

MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

- Allow time between classes for sanitization and aeration. Allow aerosols to dissipate between classes. Classes should not be more than 45 minutes long.
- See students in cohorts for several weeks for a regular or extended time class; short remote lessons for the rest of the students. Rotate cohorts throughout the year so all eventually get equal time.

OUTDOOR MUSIC

- Utilize outdoor spaces to allow for ventilation during and between music classes. Allow for time between classes for aeration. Outdoor spaces should have a covering for shade and weather.

MUSIC ON A CART

- Allow time between classes for travel, transitioning and sanitization.
- Equipment (including cart) should be usable – sound system, computer, instruments, etc.
- Students should have individual music “kits” that contain rhythm instruments that would be needed, recorders if needed, worksheets, music paper, etc.

PK-8

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Step 1

Teachers and students should be equipped with adequate and functional technology relating to music.

- Teachers create videos to deliver new and/or review previously taught content.
- Teachers and students utilize a Learning Management System like Google Classroom or Seesaw for assigning work, providing assessments, and keeping class materials organized.
- Teachers offer virtual 'office hours' to students and parents for help or extra enrichment.
- Teachers and students/parents schedule individual Zoom lessons for vocal or instrumental instruction.

Step 2

A hybrid model of teaching should be divided into between primary (in-person) instruction and extension (remote) instruction.

Primary (In-Person) Instruction

- Teachers present new concepts focusing on Create, Respond, Connect Learning Targets.
- PERFORM can be addressed through movement, or with instruments that do not require exhalation.

Extension (Remote) Instruction

- Teachers provide videos to review instructions for assignments and practice.
- Performance-based skills can be practiced, and students may submit videos of their work, or schedule a Zoom meeting for feedback.
- Assignments allow for student voice and choice; students set personal goals, choose from a wide variety of ways to show progress (written submissions/assessments, videos, recordings).
- Singing instruction/activities/assignments provided.

Step 3

Teachers and students should have access to adequate and appropriately functional technology to broadcast instruction to socially distanced students (screens for projection of instructional materials/music, speakers to project accompaniment, microphones, 1:1 devices to prevent sharing of materials).

- Teachers adapt songs and dances to adhere to physical distancing guidelines.
- Teachers focus on percussive music (drumming, body percussion, Orff instruments), or instruments such as guitar, ukulele, drum set, electric bass (Modern Band) that do not require singing.
- Proper sanitation of instruments is done between classes. Students do not share instruments.
- Music teachers collaborate with classroom and arts teachers to provide opportunities for music integration across content areas.

9-12

SCHEDULING

- Equip Students with Resources for Self-directed Learning, Supervised by a Parent/Adult Volunteer. Clearly communicate classroom procedures with students and parents.
- Class schedules may need to change to accommodate the school master schedule.
- Shorter, more focused rehearsals may need to be developed.
- Large ensembles may need to be reorganized into multiple classes that meet at different times to satisfy social distancing guidelines.
 - For example, if your in-person or hybrid rehearsal is normally 50 minutes, consider creating two 25-minute rehearsals to give each student maximum environmental flexibility and possibly increase the likelihood of sustained participation.
- “Alternate-day” scheduling may be used to reduce large class sizes.
 - For example, Group A may rehearse in larger rehearsal rooms on one day while Group B engages in listening, style study, analytical and other non-playing assignments in a different space. The schedule would “alternate” allowing each student the opportunity to play.
- For teachers who travel between school campuses within one day, If same day travel is not permitted:
 - Create a schedule that rotates staff between campuses not on the same day (ex MWF campus 1, TTh campus 2).
 - If a daily rotating schedule is not allowed (ex MWF campus 1, TTh campus 2), create a weekly rotating schedule using the same virtual learning and supervision options.
- Engage in Project-Based Learning with classroom teachers to provide students with rigorous cross-curricular learning opportunities.

9-12

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Step 1

- Create a detailed plan for each rehearsal/class meeting so that you can seamlessly pivot in and out of instruction.
- Create pauses for students to type/ask questions, so you can clarify and keep them engaged.
- Consider using music that is not difficult and focus learning on skill building.
- Don't try to do too many things in each setting. Plan for tech problems and alternative solutions if experienced.
- Allow for discussion time among students to vary the pace and cognitive load of the meeting/rehearsal.
- Full remote learning centers focusing on technology-led instruction, individual part learning, and assessment.
 - Consider creative projects that allow students to engage in the artistic process without the direct use of technology.
- Work to create ensemble singing or playing experiences among members.
 - Engage in small group rehearsals/sectionals via video conferencing (student or teacher led) to continue to build community and collaboration within the ensemble.

Step 2

- Expand listening projects that include responses and musical evaluation components.
- Use additional resources like the Marine Band online Sousa library and music publishing company online recording databases to allow students to access and play with a full ensemble.
- Consider digital collaboration platforms:
 - Acapella App, JamKazam, My Choral Coach, etc.
- Use video conferencing student-to-student performance and/or student-to-teacher performance.
 - Students perform parts or solo repertoire for each other (1:1, small group, or class performances).
 - Students perform for digital class (solo or part from ensemble music).
- Record performances and distribute for audience/community viewing.
- Engage in the use of technology in the classroom as preparation to pivot to remote learning
 - Communication Tools (Email, Remind, Google Classroom, Canvas and other Learning Management Suites).

9-12

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES, CONT'D

Step 3

- Consider a focus on solo and small ensemble singing or playing in the early part of the academic year when physical distancing protocols may be imminent.
- Equip students with resources for self-directed learning:
 - Secure accompaniment and part recordings.
 - Use digital platforms during in-person instruction to promote a seamless transition to at-home learning if needed.
 - Provide students with materials for future units early during the instructional year.
- Each student should have individual copies of music; do not share materials.
- Create one-way traffic patterns for entry and exit of rehearsal rooms. If only one door exists, make it one way before class, and the opposite after. NO simultaneous opposing traffic.
- Maintain full ensemble social connections while doing the majority of rehearsal in small groups.
 - Be intentional about varying group assignments and leaders.
 - Plan for non-contact social / team building activities .
 - Equip student leaders with digital tools for student-led activities.
 - Create alternative social activities that adhere to CDC and district guidelines

Musical Theater

The music educator will need to review the updated guidelines prior to the start of rehearsals. Currently, the Step 2 protocol should be followed. If guidelines change and children can sing, act and dance in person, MTI offers an option for a live-streamed performance. [MTI Streaming Guidelines](#).

Step 1

- Teacher creates fully remote lessons that teach students about the various aspects of theatre required to create a polished performance (costumes, stage makeup, advertising, props, sets, etc).
- Digital performances can be created with proper licensing. This type of editing is specialized and educators will need PD and time to practice with iMovie, Pro Tools, Logic and other editing software. As another alternative, professionals could be contracted to edit the digital performances.
- To record scenes, the educator meets with the cast via the school's preferred communications platform. The students attend this meeting in whatever costumes/makeup they would like for their character. The students run through their lines and then the educator records the students speaking their lines.
- To record music, share the rehearsal and accompaniment tracks with students. They will require two devices- one with headphones to listen to the track and another device to record their performance. After recording, the student shares the video with the educator for editing.

Step 2

- Teacher meets in-person with a cohort of students to teach them about the various aspects of theatre required to create a polished performance (costumes, stage makeup, advertising, props, sets, etc).
- Compile the scenes and music following the protocol detailed in Step 1.

Step 3

- Teacher meets in-person with a cohort of students to teach them about the various aspects of theatre required to create a polished performance (costumes, stage makeup, advertising, props, sets, etc).

Resources

SUMMARIES OF RESEARCH:

- National Association for Music Education: [Social Emotional Impact](#)
- Bright Horizons- [Children and Music: Benefits of Music in Child Development](#)
- Child Development Institute: [Music Is an Important Ingredient for Child Development and Parent-Child Relationships](#)
- [Overview of Research on Music and Learning](#)
- [Music Interventions and Child Development: A Critical Review and Further Directions](#)
- [SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND MUSIC EDUCATION](#)
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Resources, Cont'd

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- [VT-AOE Safety and Health Guidance for VT Schools](#)
- [ACDA Covid-19 Committee Report](#)
- [Performing Arts Aerosol Study](#)
- [NJ September Ready Fall 2020 Guidance for Arts Education](#)
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