

“Secrets of Success” from the Vermont MIDI Project

Strategies and Protocols developed based on observations and data collected since 1995

www.vtmidi.org

Sandi MacLeod, Ed.D., Project Coordinator sandi@vtmidi.org - 802-879-0065

1. Create clear, specific guidelines for the initial student compositions. The more structure the better. Allow for variation *if* an individual student can explain what they want to do or why they want to do it.
2. Provide models, particularly student models of compositions.
 - a. Remove the name and share work by other students in your school or previous semesters/years.
 - b. Use online examples by others: Vermont MIDI Project – www.vtmidi.org, www.ctcomp.org, groovymusic.com, sibeliusmusic.com, noteflight.com
3. Reflection and critique
 - a. Students describe what they are doing in their own composition.
 - b. Students describe their intent in their own composition.
 - c. Students learn to listen, view and provide **positive** feedback to compositions by other students in their classroom.
 - i. Pair and share with guiding questions as well as open ended ones.
 - ii. Older students might listen and provide feedback.
 - iii. Pair with a collegiate music ed program, especially one that supplies student teachers to your system, for feedback to a few compositions. Provide them with the assignment you gave students and some written description of the work by each student with the intent and where a student would like specific feedback.
 - iv. Share across town or district with a friendly colleague.
 - v. Online mentoring with a professional composer or two.
 - vi. Two Hints: A - Teaching students to provide respectful feedback takes time, repetition and much coaching from the teacher. I’ve noticed that today’s students get in the “chatter for the sake of responding” mode and their feedback is often more like false praise, or conversely, unfortunately harsh. The teacher’s job is to train students in analyzing and problem solving just as much as to provide composition instruction. B – share work in progress, not just completed work. Students are less likely to make changes based on feedback to finished work.
4. A curriculum rich in listening and analyzing
 - a. Listen to short examples of all styles and genres.
 - b. Pay attention to every listening opportunity within the classroom and daily life.