

**Alabama Bandmasters MPA Sight-reading Clinic**  
**AMEA Conference**  
**January 22, 2010**  
**Terry S. Ownby, Clinician**  
[townby@mscs.k12.al.us](mailto:townby@mscs.k12.al.us)  
**Office – (256) 389-2642**  
**Cell – (256) 627-5394**

## **Sight-reading 101 – Where does it all begin?**

- **Sight-reading skills begin day 1 of beginning band and are reinforced throughout the band curriculum –**
  - **Counting system – find on that works for you**
    - Number system – traditional method of counting
    - The Pie Game – Pie/Apple Pie – see page \_\_\_\_ for details
      - Quarter note = pie
      - Two eighth notes = ap-ple
      - Triplet = cho-co-late
      - Eighth note followed by two sixteenths = straw-ber-ry
      - Two sixteenths followed by one eighth = but-ter-scotch
      - Four sixteenth notes = hu-ckle-ber-ry
    - Using Down/Ups of foot movement
      - Quarter note = down
      - Two eighth notes = down - up
      - Eighth note followed by two sixteenths = down up up
      - Two sixteenths followed by one eighth = down down up
      - Four sixteenth notes = down up up up
    - Breath Impulse System
    - Sueta Rhythm Syllables – see attached sheet
  
- **Have a plan of attack –**
  - Every rehearsal should be well planned
    - Know what you want and need to accomplish daily
    - Use check sheets
    - Plan the pacing of your rehearsal
    - Plan when and how you transition from one activity to another
  - Always begin and end with a plan
    - If you shoot from the hip you might get shot!!!
  - Begin teaching your students from day one the basic concepts that you will use to sight-read. Keep terminology consistent within your program
  - Consistency is the key – you cannot wait till 2 weeks before you have to sight-read at MPA to cover the things needed
    - Remember everything you do should be a building block for other concepts
    - Sight-read something daily –

- Not necessarily a full piece of music
  - New lines from method books
  - New key signatures
  - New rhythm sheets
  - Rhythm Vocabulary Charts – Ed Sueta
  - Rhythm Sheets from Method Books
  - Write your own exercises
  - “Sight-read” new sections of music that you are working on
- **Teach Scales –**
  - Not just notes but scale patterns
  - Teach how to “read” the key signature
  - Use varied articulations in scale routines to aid in sight-reading articulation patterns
- Use Method books to reinforce and drill rhythms and rests in short exercises
- Use Chorales to teach blend, balance and phrasing
- Bruce Pearson quote: ***“the younger the band, the more rehearsal time that should be devoted to skill building.”***
  - Teach your students the skills they need to succeed – review as needed to ensure that the concepts are understood and can be applied in the musical context
  - Students with developed skills need less rehearsal time to prepare music
  - Difficulty of music will determine the amount of rehearsal time that is required
  - Make sure you consider the ability level of your group when picking literature – undo stress for both director and student can be avoided when music that is picked fits the ensemble
    - It is okay to stretch or push your group – just know their limitations
    - Program music throughout the year that is above and below your ensembles normal playing level –(if your group plays Grade 3 literature, find good grade 2 to grade 3.5 - 4 literature that can teach needed concepts)
- Teach your students to distinguish what is the melody, bass line and accompaniment parts –
  - talk about this in your study time as time allows for each section
  - But your group will do better if they already have an understanding of this concept and are able to distinguish their role as they study.

## ➤ Use a Verbal system to Guide Sight-reading study time

- STARS
    - S – Key Signature – Sharps and Flats in the Key
    - T – Time Signature and Tempo markings
    - A – Accidentals – check for accidentals not found in Key signature
    - R – Rhythms – silently count – when instructed clap/hiss/count out loud – Pay Special attention to Rests
    - S – Signs – look for dynamic markings, articulations, tempo changes, repeats, endings and any other instructions printed on music
  - PKRSD
    - P – pulse
    - K – Key Signature
    - R – Rhythm
    - S – Style
    - D – Dynamics
  - TKTTRS
    - T – Title
    - K – Key Signature
    - T – Time Signature
    - T – Tempo
    - R – Road map
    - S – Stylistic markings
- A word here – every time you sight read a line, exercise or music – we should not only strive for correct rhythms and notes, we should get the students to a point where they can also add musical expression into the mix. We must always strive to make every piece of music we play expressive. This is also VERY important in the sight-reading room
- Use UIL Criteria Sheet to make sure you know what your band is responsible for
- Review Scales/Time Signatures that you will be responsible for in sight-reading
  - Review Basic Rhythm Patterns that your Classification band is responsible for with your students. Note that in some instances, the percussion will have additional rhythms from those listed for the winds.
- My Daily Rehearsal – 49 minute class – I try to sight read something everyday in class. It doesn't have to be an entire piece, but the students need the consistency of a daily routine of sight-reading to help reduce the stress level the day of MPA.
- Daily Schedule is on Powerpoint
  - Bell rings at 10:33. Students in seat and downbeat at 10:38
  - Daily Warm-up
    - Tone Builders for Developing Band
    - Rhythm Builders – play new line using the STARS guide from folder – 30 second silent study, talk through using routine that I

will go through in sight-reading room. Count and hiss rhythms while fingering thru music. Play and make comments as needed

- First Chorales for Band – review Chorale and or scales
- Music rehearsal
- Closing Announcements
- **Plan the work and work the plan!!!!**
  - Use a time guided lesson plan to make sure you stay on task
  - Keep plan on podium to refer as needed to make sure you cover your objectives

➤ **The Sight-reading Room – (DON'T PANIC)**

- Students should be familiar with what will happen in this room. PRACTICE this with them so that they understand what all expectations are, and what their role is during all aspects of sight-reading
- Students should enter room in a disciplined and orderly fashion
- Students should adjust their seating arrangement to “fit the room” setting up as closely to your normal set up as possible
- Students should place their own music folders under their chair
- The Adjudicator will give instructions to the students about sightreading and what is intended to be accomplished
- The room assistants will pass out the sight-reading folders. Students are **NOT** to open the folders until they are instructed to do so by the adjudicator, ***BUT should check to make sure they received the appropriate folder for their section***
- The adjudicator will issue any final instructions to the group, and ask students to open the folder and take out the appropriate selection.
- Once the adjudicator is sure that all parts have been distributed and they are correct, he/she will begin the 7 minute Score study time
- Only **1** Director is allowed to give instructions during the 7 minute time period
- The adjudicator will let the director and band know how much study time is remaining at appropriate intervals – USE ALL THE TIME ALLOTTED.
- At the end of the review time, the adjudicator will call time and instruction will stop
- At this time, you are allowed warm-up to play scales, and exercise or a chorale of your choosing for up to 1 minute (NOT ANYTHING FROM THE SIGHT-READING MATERIAL)
- Once this is done, this piece should be put back up and then you will sight-read the selected piece
- Once sight-reading is complete, each section should pass all the parts back up to the section leader. The section leader needs to quickly put the music back in score order and place it back inside the folder.
- The room assistants will then collect all the music.

➤ **WHAT YOU MAY DO DURING THE STUDY TIME**

- Use your method to go over the sight-reading piece with your band (ex. STARS)
- Point out key signatures
- Review time signatures

- Provide pertinent information that will give students their best chance to sight read the piece successfully –
  - Key and all changes
  - Meter and all changes
  - Tempo and all changes
  - Style at the beginning of the piece and any changes
  - Dynamic levels and changes
  - All repeats (esp. D.S.'s, D.C.'s and any Coda)
  - Solos and/or soli sections (if applicable)
  - Technically difficult sections (analyze and practice silently)
- Count rhythms together
- Hiss and finger rhythms
- Sing rhythms
- Answer student questions about the piece of music
- Ask Guided questions – see examples
  - “What Key is at the beginning of the piece?”
  - “Any Key Changes?”
  - “Where does the key change(s) occur?”
  - “What is the meter at the beginning?”
  - “Any meter changes?”
  - “Where does the meter change(s) occur?”
  - “Is there a place where the temp changes?”

➤ **WHAT YOU CANNOT DO DURING THE STUDY TIME**

- Director/students cannot make any musical sound on an instrument during the study time.
- Students may not talk to one another during the review time.
- See excerpt from current ABA Handbook-

*Section 4, Alabama Bandmasters Music Performance Assessment Sight-Reading*

*a) The sight-reading portion of the Assessment immediately follows the concert performance. Bands which enter the ABA Music Performance Assessment must sight-read in their respective classifications.*

*b) All band members participating in the concert performance must be present and participate in the sight-reading assessment.*

*c) Each band is required to sight-read a concert selection. The director of the band will have seven (7) minutes for score study and instruction. These seven (7) minutes include score study and any teaching techniques the director chooses to use. Once the sight-reading folders have been distributed there can be no musical sound generated by any instrument during the instruction period. EXCEPTION: The tympani may tune.*

*d) Only one (1) band director will be allowed to give instructions during the instruction period.*

*e) Immediately after the instruction period, and prior to the performance, each band may play a brief warm-up to include any of the following:*

*(1) Long tones*

*(2) Scales*

*(3) Chorale*

*This warm-up period will not exceed one (1) minute.*

Resources I use daily:

Tone Builders for Developing Band – Curnow

Rhythm Builders -

Scale Builders –

First Chorales for Band – James Swearingen

Rhythm Vocabulary Charts for Effective Rhythmic Development – Ed Sueta – Bk 1 & 2

Resources for clinic info

Riverside Middle School Band Website - <http://riversidemiddleschool.com/band/>

Rehearsing the Very Band – Bruce Pearson – Kjos publication Spring 2002 Volume 5

Preparing the Band for Sight Reading – Joe Pappas – TBA Journal Sept-Nov 2003

The Do's and Don't's of Sight Reading at Festival – Karl Fitch and John Vorwald

Essential Elements Series – Hal Leonard

Teaching Band and Orchestra Methods and Materials – pg 129-134

# **Alabama Bandmasters Association**

## **Sight-reading Guidelines and Procedures**

### **Music Performance Assessment**

1. Students should enter the Sight-Reading Room in a disciplined and orderly manner.
2. Students should adjust their seating arrangement to “fit into the room” setting up as closely as you would in your band room. Be sure you have already assigned percussionists to the parts you want them to cover BEFORE going to MPA.
3. Students should place their folder under the chair.
4. Once band is seated and ready the Adjudicator will give the director the score for the sight-reading piece so that they may begin silent study of the score.
5. The room assistants will begin to pass out sight-reading materials once band is seated and once adjudicator gives the instruction to do so.
6. Section Leaders should check to make sure they were given the appropriate folder for their section. (*Do not open folder*)
7. The adjudicator will give instructions to the band about sight-reading and what is intended to be accomplished.
8. The adjudicator (assistants) will make any adjustment to folders if needed.
9. The Adjudicator will issue these instructions:
  - a. Please open your folders and remove (*name of selection to be played*). Is this the correct part in the folder for your instrument? Are there any problems?
10. The band director should then be given notice to be ready to start instruction time with band. Once band director is in place and ready the 7 minute time period should begin.
11. Only 1 band director should give instructions during sight-reading.
12. The adjudicator will let the director and band know how much study time is remaining at appropriate intervals – USE ALL THE TIME ALLOTTED.
13. At the end of the review time, the adjudicator will call time and instruction will stop
14. At this time, you are allowed warm-up to play scales, and exercise or a chorale of your choosing for up to 1 minute (NOT ANYTHING FROM THE SIGHT-READING MATERIAL)
15. Once this is done, this piece should be put back up and then you will sight-read the selected piece
16. Once sight-reading is complete, each section should pass all the parts back up to the section leader. The section leader needs to quickly put the music back in score order and place it back inside the folder.
17. The room assistants will then collect all the music.
18. Students should exit the room in a disciplined and orderly manner.


# UIL Sightreading Criteria/ Alabama Bandmaster Association

## Sightreading levels and conference assignment

Level	Conference			<u>ALABAMA Classification</u>
I	C			G
II	CC	B	A	E, EE, and F
III	CCC	BB	AA	D, DD, C, CC
IV		BBB	AAA	B, BB
V			AAAA	
VI			AAAAA	A, AA

### Level I – Class G Bands

**Key:** Concert F, B-flat, E-flat Major.  
Maximum of one key change.

**Meter:**   
Maximum of one meter change.

**Rhythm:** Basic Patterns



Percussion Only



**Length:** Two and one-half (2 1/2) minutes or less.

### Level II – Class E, EE, F Bands

Same criteria as Level I - Conference C **EXCEPT:**

**Key:** Maximum of two (2) keys with a maximum of two (2) key changes.



### Level III – Class D, DD, C, CC Bands

**Key:** Concert F, B-flat, E-flat Major.

Maximum of two (2) keys with a maximum of two (2) key changes.

**Meter:** 

Maximum of two (2) meters with a maximum of two (2) meter changes.

**Rhythm:** Basic Patterns



Percussion Only



**Length:** Three (3) minutes or less.

### Level IV – Class B, BB Bands

Same criteria as Level III - Conference CCC - BB - AA **EXCEPT:**

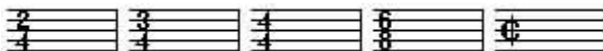
**Key:** Add A-flat

**Rhythm:** All sixteenths can be used for percussion AND wind players.

### Level V -

**Key:** Concert F, B-flat, E-flat, A-flat Major.

Maximum of two (2) key changes.

**Meter:** 

Maximum of two (2) meter changes.

**Rhythm:** Basic Patterns



**Length:** Four (4) minutes or less.

## Level VI – Class A, AA Bands

**Key:** Concert F, B-flat, E-flat, A-flat Major.

Maximum of three (3) key changes.

**Meter:** 

Maximum of three (3) meter changes.

**Rhythm:** Same as Basic Patterns for Level V.

**Length:** Four and one-half (4 1/2) minutes or less.

## INTRODUCTION

The thirty two Rhythm Vocabulary Charts in this book contain a basic rhythmic foundation for the developing musician. The purpose of the Charts is to lead the student toward rhythmic understanding and independence.

Two types of music reading skills should be taught throughout the Charts: simultaneous scanning, which is a right brain function, and linear scanning, which is a left brain function.

My Rhythm Syllable System as indicated throughout the Charts, leads the student toward simultaneous scanning, whereas a number system leads the student toward linear scanning. BOTH METHODS SHOULD BE TAUGHT THROUGHOUT THE CHARTS, MY RHYTHM SYLLABLES FIRST, A NUMBER SYSTEM SECOND. As the student matures, the emphasis should be shifted from simultaneous scanning (rhythm syllables) to linear scanning (number system). The number system used will be the one preferred by the teacher. Ultimately, the student should be able to read music using either method.

The Rhythm Vocabulary Charts are sequenced in order of difficulty. Each rhythmic concept is dealt with individually and then expanded in subsequent Charts. Beginners can start with Chart One. Older students with previous experience can start at the place in the Charts where their understanding is not clear.
























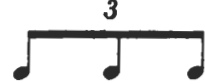


OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES are available and can be utilized in conjunction with this book in the classroom.

### SUGGESTED TECHNICS FOR OBTAINING BEST RESULTS:

*Tap Foot - All The Time*

1. Say each line and clap the notes.
2. Say each line and tap the notes with the right hand (on desk top or right knee).
3. Say each line and tap the pulse with the left hand and tap the notes with the right hand.
4. Hand tapping directions can be reversed for left handed students.
5. Foot tapping (pulse) is optional, but strongly recommended.
6. As understanding and coordination develop, increase speed. The ultimate goal should be to go as fast as possible.

## SUETA RHYTHM SYLLABLES

SYLLABLES	$\frac{2}{4}$ , $\frac{3}{4}$ , $\frac{4}{4}$ , $\frac{5}{4}$ etc.	$\frac{2}{2}$ , $\frac{3}{2}$ , $\frac{4}{2}$ , $\frac{5}{2}$ etc.	$\frac{2}{8}$ , $\frac{3}{8}$ , $\frac{4}{8}$ , $\frac{5}{8}$ , $\frac{6}{8}$ etc.
Too oo oo oo oo oo	—	—	
Too oo oo oo		—	—
Too oo oo			
Too oo*			
Too oo*			
Too			
Tâê (Tuhê and Tie) Refer to Chart 18			
Ta (Tuh)	Ta Ta Ta 	Ta Ta Ta 	Ta Ta Ta 
T (spoken letter T)	T T T T T 	T T T T T 	T T T T T 
Da Da Da (Duh Duh Duh)			

\* The reason for using the same syllables for these notes is that the second pulse is common to both.

## *S.T.A.R.S. – Sight-reading Guidelines*

**S** – **Sharps or Flats in the Key Signature.** Identify Key Signature first! Silently practice notes from the Key Signature. Look for Key Signature changes in the piece

**T** – **Time Signature and tempo markings.** Identify and look for changes in these in the piece of music

**A** – **Accidentals** – check for any accidentals not found in the Key Signature.

**R** – **Rhythm** – Silently Count and Clap (when instructed to do so) all difficult rhythms. Pay special attention to Rests!

**S** – **Signs** – look for all signs that indicate **Dynamics, Articulations, Tempo Changes, Repeats, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Endings**, and any other instructions printed on your music.



## BECOME A SIGHT READING “STAR!”



Playing a musical piece for the first time is called **sight reading**. The key to sight reading success is to know what to look for *before* you play. Use the word **S-T-A-R-S** to remind yourself what to look for, and eventually you and your band will become sight reading stars!<sup>1</sup>

- S** - **Sharps or flats** in the key signature
- T** - **Time signature** and **Tempo markings**
- A** - **Accidentals** not found in the key signature
- R** - **Rhythms**; silently count the more difficult notes and rests
- S** - **Signs**, including dynamics, articulations, repeats and endings



## MORE SIGHT READING HELP

### THE SIX COMMANDMENTS FOR DEVELOPING SIGHT READING SKILL<sup>2</sup>

The ability to read music at sight with good musicianship is a necessary and important skill for every student musician to develop. At one time or another, you will be called upon to sight read unfamiliar music. Sight reading is a normal part of auditions that are routine for getting into school groups, state bands, community groups, military bands, music schools and conservatories. In addition, you will frequently have to read new music in school ensemble (group) rehearsals. Lacking the skill to be in control of these situations can be frustrating and sometimes embarrassing. The goal, then, is to help you develop skill and confidence in being able to read music fairly accurately the first time around. Highly developed sight reading skill is one mark of an accomplished musician.

On the following page, you will find some “words to live by” when it comes to sight reading. These will be referred to as the “**Six Commandments for Developing Sight Reading Skill.**” Become familiar with them, and soon you and your band will become sight reading stars!

<sup>1</sup> Lautzenheiser, Tim, Paul Lavender, John Higgins, Tom C. Rhodes, and Charlie Menghini. *Essential Elements 2000*. Book 2. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Garofalo, Robert. *Blueprint for Band*. Meredith Music Publications, 1983.



### THE SIX COMMANDMENTS FOR DEVELOPING SIGHT READING SKILL<sup>3</sup> (CONTINUED)

1. **Sight Read More:** “We learn by doing.” Set aside a specific part of *each* practice period for sight reading practice. Just as you work to improve your tone quality, rhythm, and/or technical skill, the same is for sight reading. If you have difficulty sight reading music, start with easy material first. As your skills begin to improve, gradually increase the difficulty of material.
  
2. **Develop the Proper Attitude:** “A strong desire to become an excellent sight reader.” Every new piece of music encountered in rehearsal (including the music in your method book) should be viewed as an opportunity for developing your sight reading skill.
  
3. **Develop Your Powers of Concentration:** “A question of mind over matter.” Reading music at sight requires total concentration. Practice sight reading when your mind is fresh and alert.
  
4. **Don’t Stop:** “Good sight readers are constantly reading ahead.” When you sight read a piece of music, don’t stop until you reach the end. In ensemble (group) sight reading, always try to keep your place in the music by focusing on beat one in each measure: skip what is too difficult and come back in when you can.
  
5. **Know Your Instrument:** “Good sight readers recognize patterns of sound and rhythms.” Technical proficiency (know-how) on your instrument is necessary if you wish to become a good sight reader – scales, articulations (tonguing), dynamics, flexibility, tone, alternate fingerings or slide positions, and so on.
  
6. **Analyze the Music Before You Play It:** “Sight read it in your head before you sight play it on your instrument.” Use the **S-T-A-R-S** method!



<sup>3</sup> Garofalo, Robert. Blueprint for Band. Meredith Music Publications, 1983.