



Peer Mentor Training Outline

Each of the following teaching elements is highlighted in the Peer Mentor Training Video and listed here for clarification and discussion.

1. **COMMUNICATE** - The first important step to being a great Peer Mentor is establishing effective communication. Consider the following elements.
 - a. Be positive. Remove “no” from your vocabulary completely. Even appropriately stated negativity halts the learning process. Let the phrase, “Good job, now try this” become your refrain. Always acknowledge the effort (because all effort is good) and *then* give a new challenge, task, instruction.
 - b. Patience. Great teachers are patient. They are innovative and repetitive. They are willing to meet the learner wherever he is and move forward, however slowly.
 - c. Wait time. Consider that your New Musician may need a few extra moments to process your words and instructions. Speak and then watch and listen closely. You will soon learn how much time is needed between your words and the appropriate action or reaction.
 - d. Ask for help. The Special Education teacher in the room is there to help you! Give him/her the great pleasure of answering your questions. The adults in the room went to college to learn to teach. Get everything you can from them. Consider asking, “How should I teach this? Is this behavior acceptable? How many breaks should we take? She doesn’t seem to understand- how should I say it differently? What is appropriate? Is it okay to try something different?”
 - e. Redirect. Your New Musician is *new* to the music room. You are the leader and it’s okay to tell her if she is being disrespectful, not following the rules, or not meeting expectations. Kind but firm redirection is acceptable, but it’s never okay to speak down to someone, regardless of her ability level.
 - f. Person first language. “Student with special needs” is different (and better) than “special needs student.” The first example acknowledges the individual first. “New Musician” is a great way to refer to the group of students, and simply using his *first name* is best when you are speaking about one person.
 - g. Success and celebration. Human beings learn faster when they are having a good time. Celebrate every victory and every effort. Don’t be in a rush to move on to the next skill or line in the music. Be sincere and always take time to compliment each other.
 - h. Written music. Connecting what is written (the music) with what is heard and played takes time, patience, and consistency. Reading music is a form of communication that is very abstract. Your New Musician will probably prefer looking at your face to the music, but imitating what you do or say won’t get them very far.
 - i. I Do, We Do, You Do. Show your New Musician what to do. Do it together. Let them try it.
 - j. Aural modeling. It’s important for your New Musician to hear the appropriate sounds. We have three mentors in each group so that *at least* one person is always playing along. Two is better! We focused on Abby in the video to give consistency, but the other mentors were there, taking turns, playing along.
 - k. Physical modeling. It’s just as important for your New Musician to see what to do. Imitation will be the first step in the learning process.



2. MODIFY - Appropriate modifications are the key to your United Sound success.

a. Musical Modifications

- i. The United Sound Method helps to make the abstract concepts of music reading concrete.
- ii. Patience. Written music takes time to have meaning. Be patient and repetitive.
- iii. Stay the course. Stick to the curriculum. For example, counting rhythms using numbers has meaning for you, but for now, the curriculum uses cake, soouup, donut, and rest. *Nothing more*.
- iv. Flash Cards. Utilize the flash cards every day. Mixing up the rhythms is teaching your New Musician to sight read.
- v. Tracking. Put down the instruments and help your New Musician to track notes and measures with his finger while counting out loud.
- vi. Modifications. Your method book will come with stickers to identify string colors and raised stickers for woodwinds to help the New Musician feel where to put her fingers (instead of having to see it). Perhaps your New Musician would benefit from a “window” that prevents them from seeing more than one line (or even one measure) of music at a time? What creative modifications can you add to make the experience more successful?
- vii. Wait time. Modify your teaching style by giving ample wait time. Allow time to process your instruction before expecting a response.

b. Physical Modifications

- i. Physical assistance. With guidance from your special education teacher, don't be afraid to give physical assistance as needed.
- ii. Hand over hand. This three step process is important. 1- give physical assistance, 2- keep your hand close or barely touching, so that you're providing support, but not control, 3- remove your hand and let her try it alone.
- iii. Mentor position. Don't get stuck in your chair! You might need to kneel or stand. Don't be afraid to modify your own position for better results.
- iv. New Musician position. Experiment when something isn't working. Maybe the instrument is too heavy and a stool or chair under the arm will help? Maybe he would play better standing up?
- v. Method Book. Make sure that your New Musician is looking at the music. You might need to move the music stand really close, or take the book off the music stand all together to keep it in her line of sight. Odds are, if you can see the music well, your New Musician can't.
- vi. Abstract concepts. Be creative as you invent concrete ways to teach abstract concepts.
- vii. Room structure. Set up pods around the room with the New Musician always facing the conductor. This way, Mentors can fold in and out of position when you transition between small group and full ensemble practice, but the New Musicians don't have to move.
- viii. Preparing for concerts. As you move toward concerts, each mentor may have a different responsibility. One person might play the full (as written) part, while another plays the New Musician's modified part, and the third might have hands on: pointing to the music, or assisting with the instrument itself.
- ix. Environment. Be flexible and aware of the environment. Is it too loud? Would your New Musician benefit from being closer or father away from the podium? Does she need an extra break during the rehearsal to stay focused? Is there anything about the instrument that might be causing sensitivity or a physical distraction?



- 3. EMPOWER** - The goal of United Sound is for everyone to make an authentic, meaningful contribution. Learning to play just the right thing at just the right time, even in a modified way, is very important. Likewise, we hope that you, as a Peer Mentor, will have an authentic teaching experience. It is NOT the goal for you to assist your teacher, but rather for him/her to assist you. Be accountable to your New Musician and come to rehearsals ready to teach with your creative cap on.
- a. CELEBRATION. Your single greatest teaching tool. Be positive! Be encouraging! Celebrate every single victory, no matter how small. As the year goes on, this will be easy to forget. Don't let that happen.
 - b. No. Remove "no" from your vocabulary completely. Even appropriately stated negativity halts the learning process.
 - c. Experimentation. In the beginning, experimentation without criticism or redirection is important.
 - d. Choices. No one likes to be told what to do all the time. Create choices and options as often as possible.
 - e. Take turns.
 - i. Let your New Musician teach you. Allow her to read and count the music while you play.
 - ii. Ask her to help you play. For strings and percussion, let her help you to bow or stroke. For winds, ask her to help you push down the right button while you play.
 - f. Accountability. Teach your New Musician to put together his own instrument, rosin the bow, and put the instrument away in its case and proper place. Teach him to do as much as possible without you!
 - g. Identify. As a great teacher does, keep your eyes and ears open for what needs to be fixed. Then create fun ways to get the job done. Let the phrase, "Good job, now try this" become your refrain. Always acknowledge the effort (because all effort is good) and *then* give a new challenge, task, instruction.
 - h. Be sensitive. Just like you, some days are better than others. Keep your high standards and try not to waste a rehearsal, but be aware and ask for help. Your special education teacher might have insight about what else has gone on during the day.