

Concert Planning and Concert Etiquette Raps

Wednesday Webinar, Dec 8, 2021 presented by Denise Gagne

A holiday concert can be an event that brings school and community together. When you ask adults what they remember most about elementary school, it's rarely the math classes - it's the events that they connected with emotionally, and most often they remember the year they were a snowman in the Christmas play far better than they remember learning the times tables. Too often though, the responsibility for the holiday concert falls on the shoulders of the music teacher. Since this is a school event, it is really necessary for the entire staff to be involved. I've published this newsletter many times since I first wrote it, and it's a good reminder each year!

Planning and Delegating Responsibility: At a staff meeting early in the fall, discuss how the holiday concert will be handled. Administration should make it clear to staff that this is a school event - not the music teachers big show. All staff should be expected to help with planning, and all should be expected to attend. A coordinator for the concert is required - usually the music teacher - , but if the school is supportive, the music teacher in the school isn't burdened with doing everything.

The following tasks could be delegated:

Backdrop: One teacher or parent can take responsibility for preparing and putting up the backdrop. Simple backdrops are good. You can purchase white tarps from Home Depot. If you make your backdrop somewhat generic, you can recycle them. We painted "Happy Holidays" on half of the white tarp and stapled garland around the edges. The garland probably won't last forever, but we don't have to redo the sign each year. If you don't want the same backdrop every year, create 3-4 different ones and cycle them through. We don't have to reinvent the wheel each year!

Sound System: One teacher or parent is responsible for locating a good quality sound system, with 4 mikes: 2 for the choir, and at least 2 for soloists. If the school doesn't have a good sound system, try renting one. If you're in a rural location without rentals, a local dance band may have a PA system they would loan you or rent to you. Have a backup plan! Borrow a karaoke machine to have on stage so you have a backup in case your sound system crashes in the middle of your concert.

Risers: One teacher or parent should be responsible for borrowing and/or setting up risers.

Stage Helpers: A couple of stage hands for the night of the concert should be found. There is always something that needs to be adjusted, and the concert co-ordinator doesn't have enough hands to do it all. I often have a few responsible fifth graders become my stage hands. Some of the kids that really don't like speaking parts, make great stage helpers! The stage helpers should remember to bring some emergency supplies in case of accidents:

- * paper towels (vomit, leaky bladders)
- * big garbage can, big garbage bags
- * clorox wipes, rubber gloves (vomit)
- * broom and dustpan (broken flashlight candles)
- * kleenex (bleeding noses, runny noses)

Scene Rehearsal: Even when there is a music specialist every classroom teacher should provide extra rehearsal time for their own classes. The music specialist can make a CD of the class's song or a YouTube video, for rehearsal purposes so the classroom teachers can help. (Themes & Variations

Christmas programs allow you to do this - please check copyright regulations on other publications before copying anything!)

Classroom teachers can use music or phys-ed time to rehearse songs and dances. When they have them learned, bring in the concert coordinator to help with entrances, exits and staging. Ask all staff members to prepare the children for the “what if’s” that can happen. If you are the music specialist, allow time to go through this with all children who will be in the concert.

* “What if - you have to puke?” (Get to the garbage can at the side of the stage if you can!)

* “What if - you have to go the bathroom?” (Use bathroom before show. Don’t drink soda or pop!)

* “What if - you feel woozy?” (If you feel woozy when on stage, just sit down and put your head between your knees.) At least they won’t fall off the top riser!

Costumes: Meet with the concert co-ordinator to plan costumes for each group. The co-ordinator or the classroom teacher should determine what costumes and props are needed. Decide who will be sending notes home to parents with details of what their child should wear. Keep it simple! The easier the better. Sometimes just a hat will give the class the look you want.

Program: One teacher or parent should take responsibility for printing the program and for handing it out at the door (or choosing students to do this) at the actual concert.

Publicity: One teacher or parent should take responsibility for sending notes home giving the date, time and location of the concert.

Supervision Backstage: The concert coordinator will be in the wings, coordinating entrances and exits. Two teachers will be needed backstage to ensure that groups are ready to go on, on cue. All classroom teachers will be needed to supervise their children off stage. This is probably going to be the toughest hour of the school year. I had 90 children backstage one year. I played Concentration, Stella Ella Olla, and Topnotcher with them and managed to have fun while we waited. Look up the games on Musicplayonline.com. Videos don’t work well, unless you have a very large screen and a loud sound system. Taking children back to their own classroom and playing board games seems to be a good solution also.

Concert Setup: The concert coordinator will need some release time from regular classes to organize the setup of the stage area. Be sure to ask in your newsletter for parent volunteers to help with this. The backdrop needs to be put up, and all student art work that you can display, should be put up. A final check needs to be made that all props are ready to be taken on stage from the wings. There are 2 things that parents hate at a Christmas concert - not being able to see their child, and not being able to hear what is being said and sung. Check and double check your sound system, and use risers so your students are all seen!

Photos/Videotaping: Ask a staff member to find a parent volunteer to take photos and videotape the concert. You might have a staff member that takes great photos and give her the job.

Cleanup: One year I forgot to delegate a clean up crew, so guess who ended up cleaning up? Don’t forget to have teachers and parents who are responsible for taking down the backdrop and art work, loading instruments and props into vans, and returning them to school or to classrooms.

Concert Co-ordinator: You still need a concert co-ordinator to bring the whole show together. Email makes communication with the staff a lot easier than it use to be, so use it frequently so that all staff knows what is going on. This is the co-ordinators checklist:

Concert Date: _____
Location: _____
Time: _____
Grades Involved: _____
Staff Member in Charge of: Verified/Done:
Backdrop: _____
Sound System: _____
Risers: _____
Stage Helpers: _____
Costumes: _____
Program: _____
Publicity/Notes to Parents: _____
Supervision Backstage: _____
Concert Setup: _____
Photos/Videotaping: _____
Cleanup: _____

Concert Etiquette: Sometimes parents need a little education about concert etiquette.

This may be especially true in communities where parents rarely attend concerts. Talking during performances, leaving the concert early, having CELL phone conversations are not infrequent complaints about parents in school concerts. Last year at my grandson's concert one mother yelled out twice, "I love you Austin!" Education is needed. To help to educate your parents, you might consider having a couple of students or the first class on stage read a poem at the beginning of the concert.

This is on Musicplayonline.com in the Happy Holidays Unit, Extra Resources.

It's right at the top of the unit! And I added an acc. track that you can use if you like.

Concert Etiquette

by Denise Gagne and Denese Odgaard

Welcome to our concert - we're really glad you came.

We will listen carefully - we hope you do the same.

Some of us are really small - our voices aren't too strong.

If you're really quiet - you'll still hear - you won't go wrong.

We have a few suggestions to make this fun for all.

Please turn your CEL phones off so they don't ring inside the hall.

If you really have to go, please leave when there's applause.

You may enter once again - when there is a pause.

If your baby's crying and it's really, really loud,

Please take them out until they're calm - this time it is allowed.

Save the hoots and hollers for when you're at the game.

When you're at a concert, it isn't quite the same.

We hope that you will stay and watch until the very end.

We really will appreciate this - our thanks to you we'll send!

I wrote a new **welcome to our show song** last year!

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Thanks for Coming to Our Show

Denise Gagné

Thanks for com - ing to our _ show. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

You'll have fun to - night, we know. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

We have worked hard to pre - pare. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

Please show us that you all _ care *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

Turn your cell phones off right now. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

Keep off till the fi - nal _ bow. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

One thing more we re - com - mend. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

Stay in seats right to _ the end. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

Have a laugh or shed a _ tear. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

We're so glad that you are _ here. *stomp pat clap snap clap pat stomp*

When the concert gets closer, the stress level in the school rises.

Remember who we're doing the concert for - it's all about giving the children a chance to perform! Ask someone in their 20's what they remember from the second grade. The chances are really good that they'll remember doing a holiday concert. This is an event they will remember for a long, long time. It doesn't matter if the choir on the risers is a little off centre or if one child sings the wrong words - what matters is that it's a positive experience for every child. I recently bumped into a favorite student I taught more than 30 years ago - and he told me he's now teaching his kids songs that I taught him in school. That's why we do what we do!

Happy Holidays to all!