

ORGANIZING AN EFFICIENT ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL

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General premises

- * Plan
- * Plan more
- * Keep it student centered
- * Make it fun

“To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan and not quite enough time.”

- Leonard Bernstein

Planning

- * Long-term and short-term
- * Lesson plans
 - * Include: a defined timeline, technical skills, aural skills, objectives
- * Backwards planning model
- * Memorize your method book exercises and conductor's scores

*“Everyone has a plan 'till they
get punched in the mouth.”*

- Mike Tyson

**Don't worry if your rehearsal doesn't always
go exactly as you planned!**

Typical rehearsal

- * Tune
- * Tune some more
- * Warm-up
- * Do we have all of the strings in tune?!?!?
- * Rehearse a piece
- * Rehearse another piece
- * Rehearse yet another piece
- * Conclusion - announcements, etc.

Factors Impacting Preparation

- * Age / Maturity level of students
- * Class frequency (daily, A/B rotation)
- * Class length
- * Class type (heterogeneous, homogeneous)
- * Class size
- * ?

Considerations

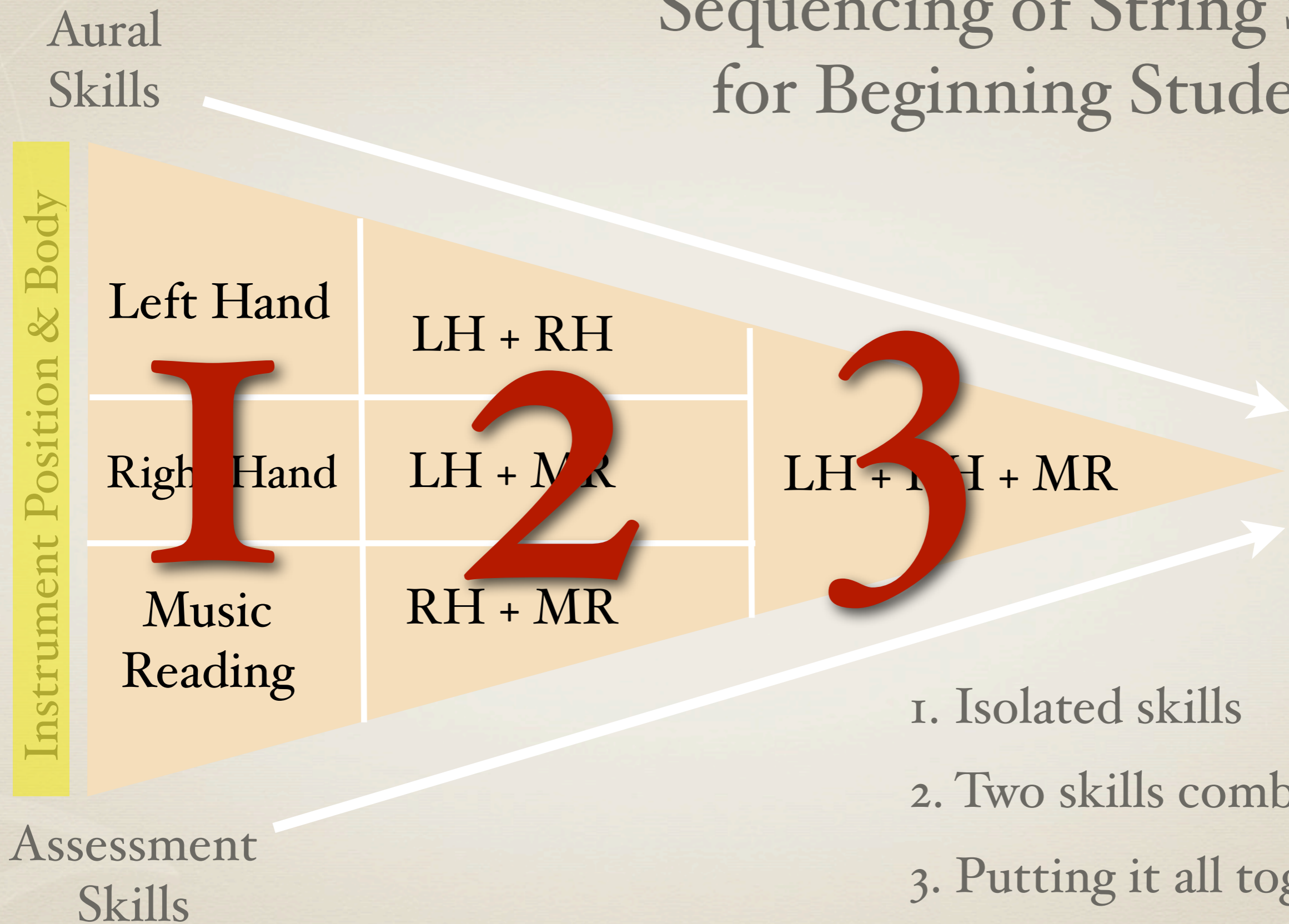
- * Pacing
- * Energy level
- * Sequencing
- * Difficulty of repertoire
- * Time until performance

Recommended Rehearsal Plan

1. Tune (carefully!)
2. Warm-up/Review
 - a. Aural Skill
 - b. Left skill
 - c. Right hand skill
3. New technical skill (RH or LH)
4. Work Passages/Sections
5. Play through
6. Wrap-up
 - a. Announcements
 - b. Homework

*Teach the technique and
music making becomes
more natural.*

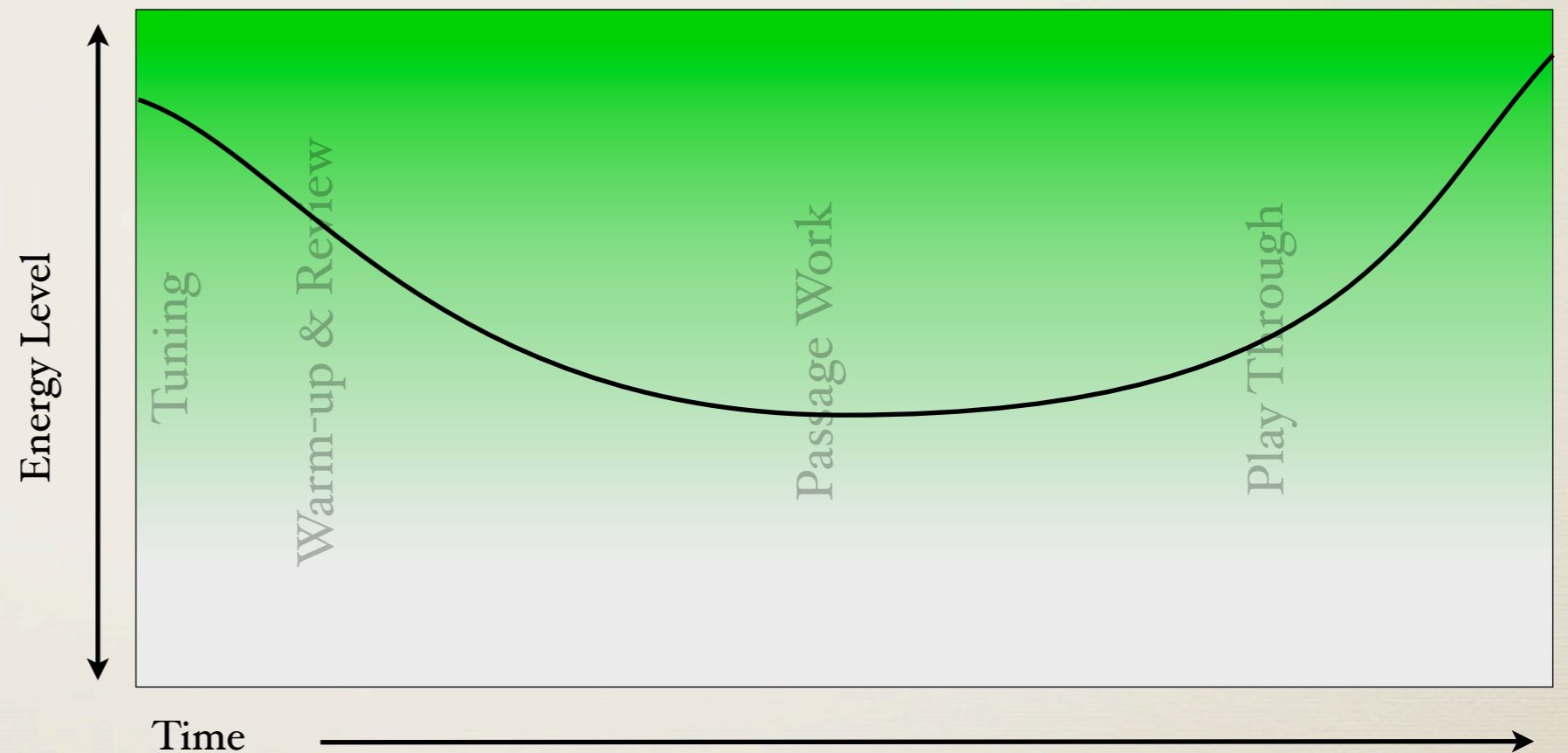
Sequencing of String Skills for Beginning Students



(Adapted from a model by Dr. Michael Allen)

Elementary Orchestra Rehearsal

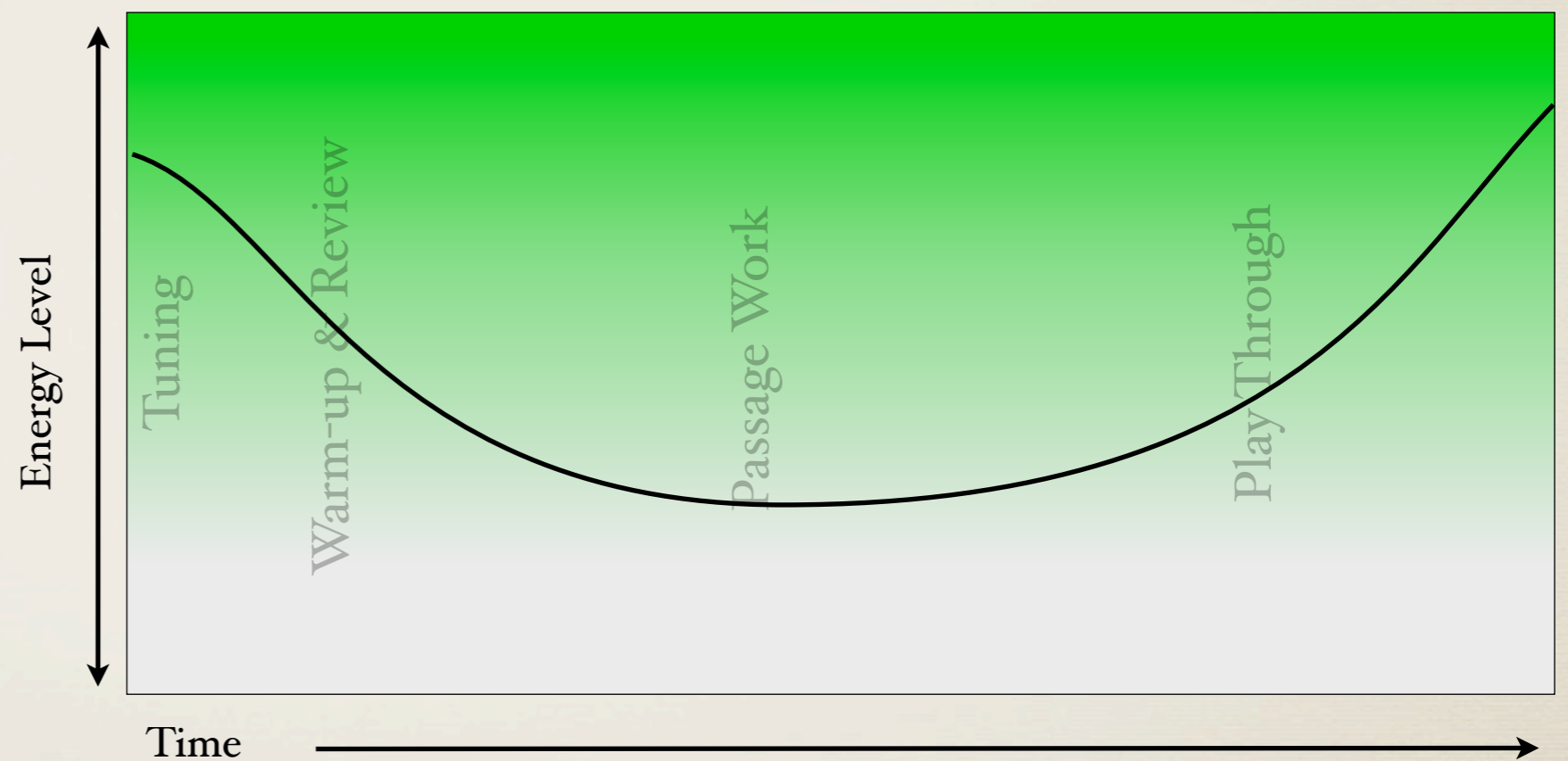
- * Fast paced
- * Many activities
- * Small steps
- * Carefully sequenced
- * One-two new concepts per lesson
- * Lots of positive reinforcement
- * Reminders
- * Motivators



Adapted from *Setting Up a Curriculum for Teaching Strings in a Class Setting* by Robert Culver

Middle School Orchestra Rehearsal

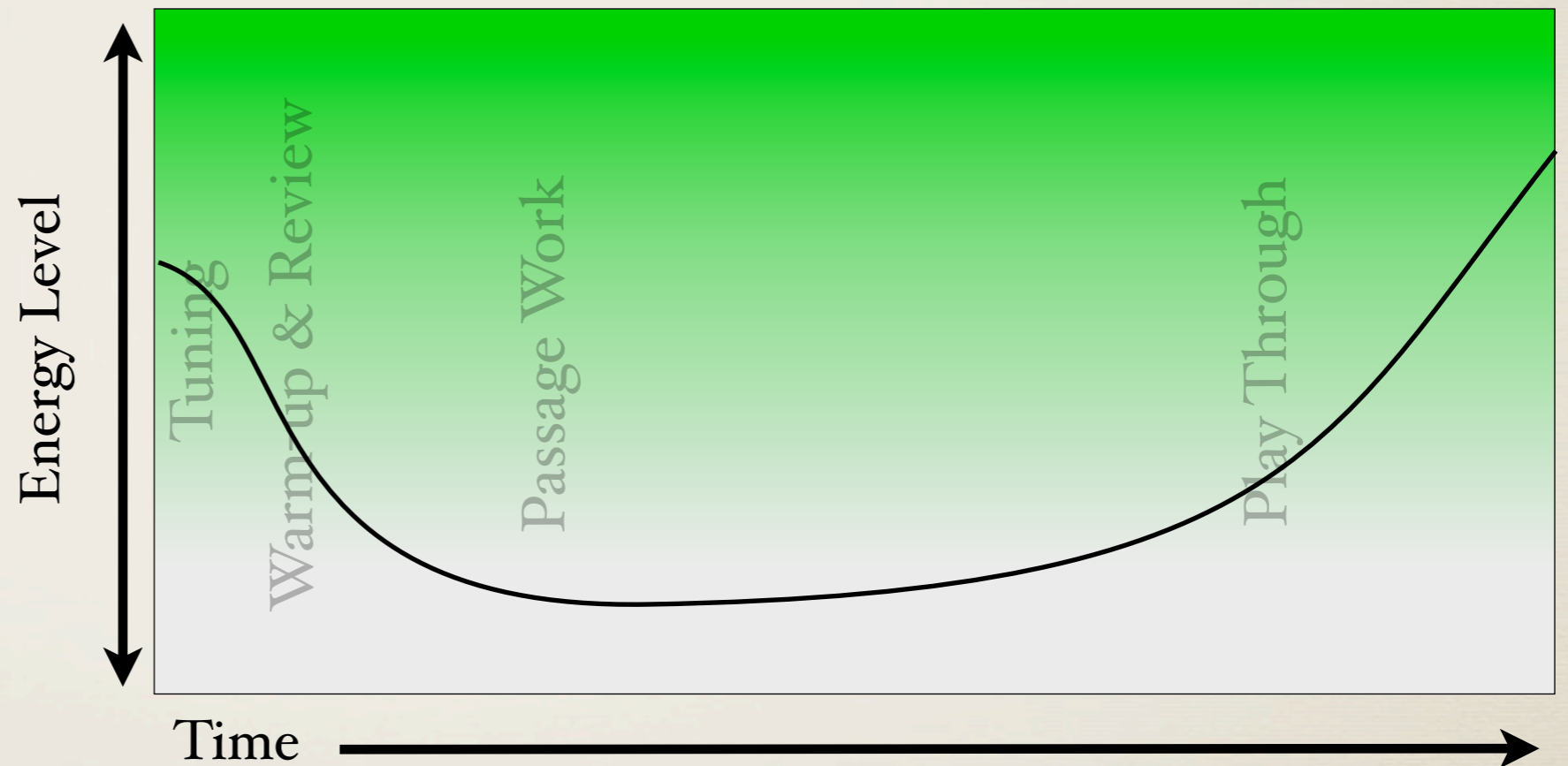
- * Moderately fast paced
- * Variety of activities
- * Two-three new concepts per lesson
- * Teach how to practice



Adapted from *Setting Up a Curriculum for Teaching Strings in a Class Setting* by Robert Culver

High School Orchestra Rehearsal

- * Slower paced
in middle
- * Less variety
of activities
- * Four or
more new
concepts per
lesson
- * Focus
- * Creativity
- * Synthesis



Adapted from *Setting Up a Curriculum for Teaching Strings in a Class Setting* by Robert Culver

Getting started...

- * How long does it take to come in the room, unpack, and get ready to play?
- * Allow students to help in this decision making process so they take ownership
- * Automate daily routines

Tuning

- * Have students play/warm-up prior to group tuning
- * Invest time in the teaching of tuning!
- * “Besides breathing, tuning is one of the most important things you’ll do today.”
- * Students **MUST** listen and audiate pitch to be tuned.

Minimizing the rehearsal rut

- * Rotate seating often
- * Alternate section seating placements, let them mix it up!
- * Try a silent rehearsal
- * Bring in guest conductors/clinicians frequently (at least once per month)
- * Show an inspiring video
- * Play a game
- * Break into small groups

Minimizing the rehearsal rut

- * Sightread
- * Other ideas??

Rehearsal Strategies

- * Start at the end and work forward
- * Get off the podium and sit in with your ensemble
(What do you hear?)

Some notes for the conductor...

- * When you stop the group, be sure to explain WHY you did
- * Keep praise specific and varied
- * If your arms are in the air, don't keep talking or give more directions
- * Don't count off. Give a preparatory beat only. Breathe.
- * Stop conducting and listen

Refinement: “Finding the Fleas”

- * Isolate difficult passages by breaking them down to fundamentals
- * Pizzicato bowed sections; Use the bow with pizzicato sections
- * Have students mark or highlight areas that need the most work
- * “If you sound good while practicing, you are practicing the WRONG part”

Questions...

“If I were playing right now in the orchestra, would I want to be lead by me?”

“Am I captivating and interesting to watch?”

*“Is the rehearsal
atmosphere supportive,
positive, and fun?”*

*“Would I want to watch
me or listen to what I
have to say?”*

“Are my conducting gestures

*“Are my comments
appropriate, specific and
helpful?”*