

All-State: How to be the Architect of a First-Rate String Program

presented by Kirk Moss

reported by Cassandra Herold

Kirk began with the most important component — a master teacher, and discussed the teacher-student loop: we initiate, but there is a loop back to the teacher from the student. There are three ways to initiate: descriptive, co-verbal teaching (asking them to do it), and non-verbal teaching. A good way to assess yourself as a teacher is to videotape a class, then time the talking part; approximately 80-85% of the time teaching should be spent in the non-verbal or co-verbal, rather than in the descriptive mode. Ask what shape is... (bow arm, hold, vibrato, etc.)

By asking students to express verbally, we ask them to think about something in a different context than they may be used to.

Be sure to choose appropriate repertoire for the group — they should not only be able to perform well technically, but also musically. This also applies to shifting and

fingering choices that are appropriate to the music. Sections should be able to have mostly common fingerings.



Kirk Moss

Kirk feels that if skills can only be taught one-on-one, then orchestra programs do not belong in the schools. Thus, we need to find ways to effectively teach all skills fundamental to playing an instrument (shifting, vibrato, bowing) within the group setting. Orchestra programs should be applicable and accessible to all students. Newer books and methods, such as *Viva Vibrato*, are helping this to happen more easily by assisting teachers with

group instruction ideas.

Kirk reminded us to take “good” out of our vocabulary — praise should always be targeted to skills, and should be specific. This way, students know what they are doing well (and other students may be listening and will make adjustments, too!) ‡