

MUS 735 – Introductions

Jim Novak

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My name is Jim Novak, and I attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for my undergraduate. I am currently in my 20th year of teaching. I have taught in Nebraska, Iowa, and now in South Dakota, and most of my career has been at the middle school level. I serve as director of bands at Harrisburg South Middle School in Harrisburg, SD. I have two concert ensembles (6th grade band and 7th/8th combined band), and a jazz band that meets before school. I live in Sioux Falls with my wife Erin, son Jay (10), daughter Nora (4), and 3 birds. I am in my third semester working toward my MME. It has always been my goal to earn a master's degree, and I am happy to finally be in the process.

My approach is and has always been one of building relationships with students. I believe that is the single most important factor in keeping them hooked into our programs, and it's just a good policy in our daily life. We all have limitations in our jobs and I've certainly had my share, from lack of rehearsal space, lack of budget, and scheduling difficulties, to name a few. My philosophy is that we can either put our energy into sharing our problems with the world, or we can find solutions and move forward, and the latter is where I always try to focus my attention. Making this school year work with the pandemic has been particularly challenging, given the myriad of adjustments we've had to make to be safe. That said, we are still meeting in person, I'm still meeting with my students for ensemble (though only once a week in half-bands), and I am still able to meet with my students individually for weekly instrumental lessons. So, we really are making things work as well as we can.

I have a confession, and I hope I'm not alone here. I almost never listen to music in the car, at least during the week. After being surrounded by music and band all day, I find solace in MPR on the drive home. It settles me and helps me turn off my work brain when I get home. When I do listen to music for fun or to relax, it is always classical or jazz, and I find myself really gravitating toward the Bruckner symphonies lately (his 4th and 8th symphonies are wonderful!).

I look forward to "meeting" you all here and learning how music fits into your life!