#5. Start-up packets

About the Author

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As educators, we all know that if we ask students to buy equipment in a “piece-meal” fashion, the parents get tired of the incurring cost and only about half of the students follow through with the request. If the parents spend the money in the very beginning of the year, all at once, it’s more likely that they will buy what you ask them to buy.

What to Instruct: I always instruct the music education majors in my Woodwinds Methods class to make an arrangement with the local music stores from which students are renting their instruments to create a “start-up” for each clarinet rental. They cannot rent the clarinet without buying the start-up packet that accompanies the clarinet. This start-up packet includes: Quality Reeds (often I have younger students buy a softer strength professional-level reed, like a Rico Reserve Classic – it will help with embouchure, air, and sound quality in the upper register); a quality ligature (one that fits the mouthpiece properly); a good swab; cork grease; small reed case that holds 4-5 reeds, and clear mouthpiece patches (VERY important for players). Often, the music store can give you a great deal on this entire packet (making it cheaper than if you bought all of this individually), and it probably will only be an additional $35-$30 on top of the rental.

Rico make fantastic and cost effective products that work very well in these packets. They are always more than happy to help coordinate with your local dealer to get the best prices for initiatives like this.

Reinforcement Techniques: By doing this, you being to instill good purchasing habits for the parents; they know exactly what to buy when the students need more reeds, etc. As I mentioned earlier, parents are more willing to spend the extra money up front than go back to the music store every week to purchase “one more thing”.

These are very simple, but powerful techniques that have helped many of the band directors that I have worked with over the years. They are always surprised and pleased that such simple, easy-to-deliver pedagogical techniques make such a big difference.

In addition to these techniques, I encourage all music educators to use the resources available to them: have experts in the field come in to work with your students. Most local private teachers and college professors are more than happy and excited to work with younger players in band programs; we all want to see good habits and training in our younger players.