DIAGNOSING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS (D.A.S.P) FOR WOODWINDS

TEACHER NAME: Chris Dorner

INTRO: Keeping track of my own personal struggles learning woodwinds and my peers' struggles has provided me with a realistic expectation for teaching and learning these new instruments. This will allow me to empathize with my students as I, too, have been in their boots and understand the struggle and frustration during times like these. Keeping a log of these also has equipped me with a toolbox of various exercises and possibilities for issues I may encounter.

FLUTE		
Problem	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
Playing overly flat or overly sharp	☐ If a student is constantly flat, they may not be putting air while they play ☐ If a student is constantly sharp, but may be putting in too air when they breath.	Breathing gym exercises focusing on the quality and amount of air used while playing
No tone production	The student is not aiming their air correctly	Diagnose where the student's air is directed towards (off-center, too left/right?) and if there is any air escaping from the corners of the mouth. Reviewing if their embouchure is incorrect or needs adjustments To reinforce concentrated air techniques/directed air, in a fun way, students will compete to see who can keep their sheet of paper on the wall the longest. Students will place a sheet of paper on the wall, and they will let go, using their air to push the piece of paper on the wall. The student whose paper stays up the longest wins. To promote straightforward directed air that will reach the embouchure hole, have the student place

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Problem	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
		their index finger in front of them To ensure air isn't escaping and that firm corners are present, have students use the goal post while breathing out
Weak/unsupported/airy tone, difficulty getting notes to respond properly	The student's embouchure is likely incorrect. Their aperture is likely too wide or spread out, allowing for air to escape.	To reinforce concentrated air techniques/directed air, place a sheet of paper in front of the student and have them blow out towards the paper at varying distances To ensure air isn't escaping and that firm corners are present, have students use the goal post while breathing out
Notes are not responding, but their air stream is correct	The student may not have the open holes on their flute completely covered with their finger pads.	Ensure that students' hands are not a sharp-C hand shape (Only the finger tips are depressing the keys, the fingers are raised away from the body of the flute), compared to a soft-C hand shape (the fingers are more relaxed, sitting lower towards the body of the flute)
Frequent breaths/unable to play for long durations	The student is likely not utilizing their air and/or air speed correctly. May be expelling air too quickly, and/or not engaging their diaphragm both during breathing and while playing.	Review firm corners, conserve air wisely Ensure that the student is engaging their diaphragm not only when they breathe in, but also when they breathe out (are their breaths in sounding "deep"/"shallow"?, placing a hand on the stomach to feel the diaphragm engaged. Use breathing gym exercises to train students' lung capacity.

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Problem	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
Constantly overblowing, a student can play "high" (i.e., 2nd harmonic & above) no problem, but can't consistently play "low" (i.e., 1st harmonic)	The student's air stream may be too fast, and/or their embouchure is not changing.	Use the analogy of "hot/warm" air for playing low, versus "cold" air for playing high. The aperture for playing low will open up just a little bit, compared to playing high, the aperture will be quite small.
Struggling to play "high" but can consistently play "low".	The student's air stream may not be fast enough, and/or their embouchure is not changing.	Use the analogy of "hot/warm" air for playing low, versus "cold" air for playing high. The aperture for playing low will open up just a little bit, compared to playing high, the aperture will be quite small.
Flute is unsupported, about to fall out of the student's hands (most evident when playing C-natural)	The student's anchor points are not secured properly or may not be established correctly. Posture (is the flute parallel to the ground?) may also play a role	Review correct flute posture and the anchor points: 1) Ensure the left-hand index finger, 1st (bottom-most) joint creates a "cradle "supported by the natural arch of the hand when wrapped around the flute. 2) Right hand, ensure the thumb is not playing too far forward/backward so that the flute is properly supported 3) With the flute parallel to the floor, the left hand is "pushing" the flute towards the face, and the right hand is "pushing" the flute away from the student. Creating an anchor point where the lips should be above the embouchure hole (these muscles will be engaged)
Students struggle with articulation: - Attack of notes is undefined or may be a sudden burst of air (air attack) - Passages that require articulation (non-slurs), there is no clear articulation	- The student is not activating the tongue when playing. If unchecked, this can result in "huffing" (i.e., 'articulating' with the air stream) - Students may be treating their air	If a student is not using their tongue to articulate (i.e., huffing) If a student is using their tongue, but maybe not using the correct part (of the correct location)

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Problem	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
- Passages that require rapid articulation are not clear, sluggish and muddy	like an on/off switch for articulating - If the student is using their tongue, but articulation is inconsistent, unclear, sluggish or muddy, they likely are not meeting the following articulation checkpoints: ☐ Are they (the student) using the tip of their tongue to articulate? ☐ Is their tongue hitting the back of the top teeth, just below where the roof of the mouth, gums, and top teeth meet? ☐ Is their tongue retracting back quickly enough?	If a student's tongue is not retracting
Flying Fingers Changes to notes that have a fair amount of fingers being changed may sound clunky, especially on the break or when doing octave leaps	☐ The student's fingers are getting too far away from the keys or wandering away from the keys they need to be near	Using a mirror while practicing to ensure fingers aren't wandering or flying Trill/tremolo exercises across the break or awkward finger changes to build dexterity

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CLARINET		
Description	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
Constant Squeaking Constant squeaking while playing most	☐ Is the student covering all open holes? ☐ Is the student applying too much pressure with their top lip? ☐ Is the student applying too much pressure with their bottom lip?	If a student is not covering holes all the way, ensure they have a soft-C hand shape, using the meat of their finger to cover the open holes, otherwise, try patches to cover the holes If a student is applying too much pressure/biting when they play, restart with fundamentals, ensuring that while their lips and corners and firm, they are not tight and using pressure.
No Tone Production	☐ Is the ligature too tight? ☐ Is the student taking in too much or not enough of their reed? ☐ Is the student biting down too much on the mouthpiece? ☐ Is the student's corners firmly wrapping around the mouthpiece?	If a ligature is too tight, loosen it If a student is not taking in enough or too much of their reed while playing, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops. Have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement, although it may vary from the piece of paper If a student is biting down on their mouthpiece while they play, have them say "Ha" and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy
Leaking air The student is having to constantly take breaths while playing passages across short spans.	☐ Air is escaping from the student's embouchure; the corners are not firm	If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy.

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CLARINET		
	enough ☐ Are the student's facial muscles fatigued from tension? (aka. Biting or too much pressure) ☐ Is the student taking in enough air while they play?	If a student's facial muscles are fatigued while they play, they are tense, have them say "Ha" and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student is not taking in enough air while they play start from the fundamentals of proper musician posture to allow for deep and supported breaths with the diaphragm.
Huffing Using the air to articulate	☐ Student is using their airstream to articulate (on/off), rather than having the airstream remain constant.	To diagnose if a student is huffing, have the student place their hand on their stomach while they play a simple articulation exercise and make observations. If their stomach is moving while they "articulate" then they're using they are stopping/starting their airstream. Restart with fundamentals of good articulation using the tongue, aiming for "too."
Flying Fingers Changes to notes that have a fair amount of fingers being changed may sound clunky, especially when crossing the break	☐ The student's fingers are getting too far away from the keys or wandering away from the keys they need to be near	Using a mirror while practicing to ensure fingers aren't wandering or flying Trill/tremolo exercises across the break or awkward finger changes to build dexterity
Unsporrted Instrument The weight of the instrument is not distributed correctly between the right thumb and mouth	☐ When crossing the break or technical passages, a student may struggle to keep the instrument in place ☐ A student may express discomfort while playing	If a student is not supporting the weight of the instrument correctly, If a student is distributing the weight of the instrument correct but experiences discomfort,

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CLARINET		
		consider invest in a clarinet neck strap
Overblowing able to play high/1st harmonic without issue, but cannot play low or fundamental tones	☐ Student may be using too much air to play ☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play ☐ Student may be using too much mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy as low notes being closer and higher notes being further away. But both take a lot of air, just lower notes are using warmer/hot air. If a student is using too much mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops, have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Underblowing can play low and fundamental tones, but cannot play high/1st harmonic and above	☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play (airy and unsupported tone) ☐ The student may not be using enough mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy, as low notes are closer and higher notes are further away. But both take a lot of air, just higher notes use faster air. If a student is not using enough mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops. Have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Overly Bright Sound Upper harmonic concentrations, nasal and piercing sound	☐ The mouthpiece is angled too far out ☐ Oral cavity isn't open enough	If the mouthpiece is angled too far out, bring it in slightly If the oral cavity isn't open enough, have the student try saying "Oh" or "Ooo" or yawn when they have their embochure set.
Crossing the break	☐ The student struggles moving fingers in time when crossing over the break	**SHORT TERM SOLUTION:** When possible, consider teaching alternative fingerings or "right-hand down fingerings".

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SAXOPHONE		
Description	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
10		
No Tone Production	☐ Is the ligature too tight? ☐ Is the student taking in too much or not enough of their reed? ☐ Is the student biting down too much on the mouthpiece? ☐ Is the student's corners firmly wrapping around the mouthpiece?	If a ligature is too tight, loosen it If a student is not taking in enough or too much of their reed while playing, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops. Have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement, although it may vary from the piece of paper If a student is biting down on their mouthpiece while they play, have them say "Ha" and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy
Overblowing (able to play high/1st harmonic without issue, but cannot play low or fundamental tones)	☐ Student may be using too much air to play ☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play ☐ Student may be using too much mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy as low notes being closer and higher notes being further away. But both take a lot of air, just lower notes are using warmer/hot air. If a student is using too much mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece,

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		and mark where the piece of paper stops, have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Underblowing (can play low and fundamental tones, but cannot play high/1st harmonic and above)	☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play (airy and unsupported tone) ☐ The student may not be using enough mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy, as low notes are closer and higher notes are further away. But both take a lot of air, just higher notes use faster air. If a student is not using enough mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops. Have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Overly dull/air/weak tone Tone sounds very unsupported and dull, lacks "body."	☐ The mouthpiece angle may be too low ☐ Reed may be too hard for the student	Raise the mouthpiece angle either with the neckstrap or by using the hand to bring the saxophone forward
Leaking air The student is having to constantly take breaths while playing passages across short spans.	☐ Air is escaping from the student's embouchure; the corners are not firm enough ☐ Are the student's facial muscles fatigued from tension? (aka. Biting or too much pressure) ☐ Is the student taking in enough air while they play?	If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy. If a student's facial muscles are fatigued while they play, they are tense, have them say "Ha" and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student is not taking in enough air while they play start from the fundamentals of proper musician posture to allow for deep and supported breaths with the diaphragm.

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SAXOPHONE		
Muddy/Unclear articulation Articulation may be slowed or ill-defined	☐ Student may use the middle of their tongue to articulate, rather than the tip ☐ A student's tongue may be too slow	If a student is using the middle of their tongue to articulate, have them whisper "too" If a student's tongue is not moving at the desired speed, they need to do individual practice of articulation exercises to build up agility
Huffing Using the air to articulate	☐ Student is using their airstream to articulate (on/off), rather than having the airstream remain constant.	To diagnose if a student is huffing, have the student place their hand on their stomach while they play a simple articulation exercise and make observations. If their stomach is moving while they "articulate" then they're using they are stopping/starting their airstream. Restart with fundamentals of good articulation using the tongue, aiming for "too."

Poorly adjusted neck strap
The saxophone sits too low or too high, affecting several aspects of playing
	☐ Neckstrap is too loose
	  ☐ The saxophone is moving very freely, likely nowhere near the student's mouth, and too low
	☐ Neckstrap is too tight
	  ☐ The saxophone doesn't move easily to the student's mouth, will likely also be very high up
		The saxophone is a piece a metal that must be brought to the player. When sitting straight and ahead and playing the saxophone straight ahead, adjust the neck strap until it either has no slack in it, or the mouthpiece falls naturally into the mouth.

Flying Fingers Changes to notes that have a fair amount of fingers being changed may sound clunky, especially on the break or when doing octave leaps	☐ The student's fingers are getting too far away from the keys or wandering away from the keys they need to be near	Using a mirror while practicing to ensure fingers aren't wandering or flying Trill/tremolo exercises across the break or awkward finger changes to build dexterity

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OBOE		
Description	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
Playing overly flat or overly sharp	☐ If a student is constantly flat, they may not be putting air while they play ☐ If a student is constantly sharp, but may be putting in too air when they breath.	Breathing gym exercises focusing on the quality and amount of air used while playing
Flying Fingers Changes to notes that have a fair amount of fingers being changed may sound clunky, especially on the break or when doing octave leaps	☐ The student's fingers are getting too far away from the keys or wandering away from the keys they need to be near	Using a mirror while practicing to ensure fingers aren't wandering or flying Trill/tremolo exercises across the break or awkward finger changes to build dexterity
Reed Response Issues A reed doesn't consistently respond when played	☐ Is the reed too dry? ☐ Is the reed too wet? ☐ Is the reed dead?	Soak the reed for longer Remove excess water alter the old reed purchase/make new reeds
Muddy/Unclear articulation Articulation may be slowed or ill-defined	☐ Student may use the middle of their tongue to articulate, rather than the tip ☐ A student's tongue may be too slow	If a student is using the middle of their tongue to articulate, have them whisper "too" If a student's tongue is not moving at the desired speed, they need to do individual practice of articulation exercises to build up agility
Huffing Using the air to articulate	☐ Student is using their airstream to articulate (on/off), rather than having the airstream remain constant.	To diagnose if a student is huffing, have the student place their hand on their stomach while they play a simple articulation exercise and make observations. If their stomach is moving while they

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OBOE		
		"articulate" then they're using they are stopping/starting their airstream. Restart with fundamentals of good articulation using the tongue, aiming for "too."
Overblowing (able to play high/1st harmonic without issue, but cannot play low or fundamental tones)	☐ Student may be using too much air to play ☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play ☐ Student may be using too much mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy as low notes being closer and higher notes being further away. But both take a lot of air, just lower notes are using warmer/hot air. If a student is using too much mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops, have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Underblowing (can play low and fundamental tones, but cannot play high/1st harmonic and above)	☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play (airy and unsupported tone) ☐ The student may not be using enough mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy, as low notes are closer and higher notes are further away. But both take a lot of air, just higher notes use faster air. If a student is not using enough mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops. Have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
Overly dull/air/weak tone Tone sounds very unsupported and dull, lacks "body."	☐ The mouthpiece angle may be too low ☐ Reed may be too hard for the student	Raise the mouthpiece angle either with the neckstrap or by using the hand to bring the saxophone forward
Leaking air The student is having to constantly take breaths while playing passages across short spans.	☐ Air is escaping from the student's embouchure; the corners are not firm enough ☐ Are the student's facial muscles fatigued	If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy. If a student's facial muscles are fatigued while they

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OBOE		
	from tension? (aka. Biting or too much pressure) ☐ Is the student taking in enough air while they play?	play, they are tense, have them say “Ha” and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student is not taking in enough air while they play start from the fundamentals of proper musician posture to allow for deep and supported breaths with the diaphragm.

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BASSOON		
Description	**Diagnoses**	**Solution**
Poorly adjusted seat strap The bassoon sits too low or too high, affecting several aspects of playing	☐ Seat strap is too loose ☐ The bassoon does not land comfortably 45-degrees ☐ Seat strap is too tight ☐ The bassoon is too far up and the student can't get the bocal/reed into they mane	The saxophone is a piece a wood that must be brought to the player. When sitting straight and ahead and playing the saxophone straight ahead, adjust the seat strap until the bocal falls naturally into the mouth.
Playing overly flat or overly sharp	☐ If a student is constantly flat, they may not be putting air while they play ☐ If a student is constantly sharp, but may be putting in too air when they breath.	Breathing gym exercises focusing on the quality and amount of air used while playing
Flying Fingers Changes to notes that have a fair amount of fingers being changed may sound clunky, especially on the break or when doing octave leaps	☐ The student's fingers are getting too far away from the keys or wandering away from the keys they need to be near	Using a mirror while practicing to ensure fingers aren't wandering or flying Trill/tremolo exercises across the break or awkward finger changes to build dexterity
Reed Response Issues A reed doesn't consistently respond when played	☐ Is the reed too dry? ☐ Is the reed too wet? ☐ Is the reed dead?	Soak the reed for longer Remove excess water alter the old reed purchase/make new reeds
Muddy/Unclear articulation Articulation may be slowed or ill-defined	☐ Student may use the middle of their tongue to articulate, rather than the tip ☐ A student's tongue may be too slow	If a student is using the middle of their tongue to articulate, have them whisper "too" If a student's tongue is not moving at the desired

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BASSOON		
		speed, they need to do individual practice of articulation exercises to build up agility
Huffing Using the air to articulate	☐ Student is using their airstream to articulate (on/off), rather than having the airstream remain constant.	To diagnose if a student is huffing, have the student place their hand on their stomach while they play a simple articulation exercise and make observations. If their stomach is moving while they "articulate" then they're using they are stopping/starting their airstream. Restart with fundamentals of good articulation using the tongue, aiming for "too."
Overblowing (able to play high/1st harmonic without issue, but cannot play low or fundamental tones)	☐ Student may be using too much air to play ☐ Student may not be controlling their air while they play ☐ Student may be using too much mouthpiece	Low/High notes analogy as low notes being closer and higher notes being further away. But both take a lot of air, just lower notes are using warmer/hot air. If a student is using too much mouthpiece, slip a sheet of paper between the reed and mouthpiece, and mark where the piece of paper stops, have the student experiment with this new mouthpiece placement.
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Overly dull/air/weak tone	☐ The mouthpiece angle may be too low	Raise the mouthpiece angle either with the

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BASSOON		
Tone sounds very unsupported and dull, lacks "body."	☐ Reed may be too hard for the student	neckstrap or by using the hand to bring the saxophone forward
Leaking air The student is having to constantly take breaths while playing passages across short spans.	☐ Air is escaping from the student's embouchure; the corners are not firm enough ☐ Are the student's facial muscles fatigued from tension? (aka. Biting or too much pressure) ☐ Is the student taking in enough air while they play?	If a student's corners aren't firm enough, use the drawstring bag analogy. If a student's facial muscles are fatigued while they play, they are tense, have them say "Ha" and place the mouthpiece in their mouth to relax while they place If a student is not taking in enough air while they play start from the fundamentals of proper musician posture to allow for deep and supported breaths with the diaphragm.