



# ALTERNATIVE STYLE STRING GROUPS - OUT AND ABOUT

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## BUILDING INTEREST IN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC

1. Begin in the curriculum
  - A. Keep it light and fun, use it as an incentive
  - B. Meet national standards
  - C. Accessible music
    - a. Start with easy tunes – Cripple Creek, Mari’s Wedding
    - b. Rote and written
    - c. Philharmonic series – arrangements done, all instruments, great recording
    - d. Transcribe tunes
2. Begin in the younger grades and take it up each year with the students
3. Develop multi-cultural aspects
4. Students will learn to appreciate the payback – more performance from fewer rehearsals
5. Choose a style of music
  - A. Fit your community
  - B. Fit your interests

## BUILDING A GROUP

### Goals

Decide your overall goals for the group –why do you want to start a group, what is its purpose

Informal organization/Within the curriculum

Formal organization

generate excitement for your program	generate excitement for your program
recruiting tool	recruiting tool
make it cool to be a string player	make it cool to be a string player
play locally	intense musical experience for kids in the group
relaxed fun atmosphere	high expectations for excellence
	play locally, play high profile venues and tour
	fun comes from striving to be excellent and the opportunities that then are available

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER AND DECISIONS TO MAKE

1. How much time are you able to devote to the group
  - A. Make sure this matches your goals
  - A. Can you expand by getting others to help
1. What age group
  - A. What are your expectations for musical achievement, behavior, etc
  - A. How many kids
  - A. How are they chosen
1. What size group
  - A. Small groups of 2-8 have the advantage of being very portable and can be used for recruiting or community outreach.
  - B. Mid-sized groups of 8-15 have the safety of numbers especially for young players.

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- C. Large groups of 15-40 get a wonderful sound but it is harder to create solo opportunities. It is easier for older students with busy schedules to be in a large group.
  - D. Draw only from your school or regionally
1. Instrumentation
    - A. Need a solo instrument, a bass line, and a harmony instrument.
    - B. Any combination of strings works for the melody.
    - C. The cellos, basses or electric bass can play the bass line
    - D. Any combination of stringed instruments can provide the harmony.
    - E. Guitars, mandolins, banjos, autoharps, and keyboards are great additions on any part.
    - F. If you don't have the right combination, balance can always be achieved through the use of sound reinforcement.
    - G. Accompaniments can also be generated with Band In A Box (PG Music).
  1. Rehearsals
    - A. Use rote and written music
    - A. Improvisation
    - A. Use student leaders
    - A. Use local college music education students
    - A. Invite your local dance teacher, guitar teacher, piano teacher, or vocal teacher to help
    - A. Invite parents, senior citizens to help
    - A. Develop a reputation as someone who listens to new ideas and builds a team
  1. Arrangements
    - A. Arranging means deciding the order of the tune and the breaks and then which instrument will play tune, harmony and bass lines in each section.
    - B. Philharmonic series
    - C. Let students actually write and teach an arrangement
    - D. Modify pre-existing arrangements to fit your group.
    - E. Try to use all your school or community's musical resources  
ie. string players, wind, percussion, guitar, banjo, singers, dancers, etc.
  1. Parents
    - A. Who makes decisions, you or the parents
    - A. Advisory boards vs. board of directors
    - A. Chance to be with their kids
    - A. Excitement
    - A. Volunteer in administration, bookings, supervision, etc.
    - A. Frees you to concentrate on the music
  1. Relationship with your school or arts organization
    - A. Affiliation with your school can possibly provide facilities, support services and insurance
    - B. Make it easy for them
    - A. Network in the community for resources
  1. Money
    - A. From playing – first volunteer or keep the cost low then begin charging as the rep builds
    - A. Sponsor program just like symphonies
    - A. From the school/organization
    - A. Sales of recordings
    - A. Staff – paid or volunteer?
    - F. Expect the members to pay for some things so there is more investment in the activity
  1. Finding bookings for gigs – build it
    - A. Parents and the people they know
    - A. Community organizations

- B. The school
  - C. Business events
  - D. Concerts in the park
  - E. Community service
2. Building a reputation – public relations
- A. Keep what you do high quality and reflective of your program
  - B. Community service
  - C. Be liberal with thanks and credit
  - D. Invite influential people to events
  - E. Take pictures and well written articles to local papers
  - F. Take CDs to local radio stations
  - G. Attend folk music events yourself and/or take your kids to alternative styles concerts
3. Touring
- A. Does it have to pay for itself
  - B. Safety and behavior issues
    - a. Do students drive
    - b. Chaperones - your guidance for their duties
    - c. School rules in effect
    - d. Respect for adults and representing your school and community
    - e. Respect for other artists
  - C. Bookings
    - a. other schools
    - b. pro venues
    - c. festivals
    - d. town events – Chamber of Commerce/tourist bureaus
    - e. travel agency
4. Costumes
- A. Simple to elaborate
  - B. What image do you want to project
  - C. Catalogues, dance shops, T-shirt shops
5. Sound Reinforcement
- A. Can amplify everyone or have one mic and soloists come to the mic
  - B. Basic
    - a. Mic, cord, amp or electric instrument directly in to the amp
    - b. Ready made system such as the Fender Passport
  - C. Custom systems
 

can be extensive but still has these basic functions

    - a. Way to pick up the sound - either a mic or a direct input from an electric instrument
    - b. Cord to take sound to something to make it louder: an amplifier
    - c. Connect the amplifier to a speaker to broadcast the louder sound
    - d. Pull in help from community or professionals
      - 1. Local guitar stores, large school music supply stores
      - 2. websites - Sweetwater Sound (most helpful if you aren't knowledgeable), Full Compass, Markertek

### **Summary of Recommendations**

- *maintain high musical and behavior standards*
- *pull in people to help*
- *only give it as much time as you choose to*
- *tailor the group to your interests*
- *tailor the group to your community*
- **HAVE FUN!**

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## Resources

There are tremendous resources available for finding tunes and learning more. Here is a short list of possibilities.

**Workshops:** Mark O'Connor Fiddle Camp, Ashokan, Fiddler Magazine website has a list

**Books:** Fiddlers Philharmonic, Fiddlers Philharmonic Encore, Jazz Philharmonic, Jazz Philharmonic Second Set, Mariachi Philharmonic, String Explorer, The Fiddlers Fakebook by Brody, Mel Bay's many fiddle books particularly the ones by Stacey Phillips, The Old Time Fiddlers Repertory, ed. Christensen, Fiddle Tunes from Marshall Crozman Music, Jazz Fiddle Wizard by Martin Norgaard, All books by Julie Lyonn Lieberman, All books by John Blake

**Videos:** Homespun Videos, especially: Contest fiddling - Mark O'Connor, Learning to Play Irish Fiddle - Kevin Burke, Bluegrass Fiddle Classics - Kenny Kosek, etc.

**Artists:** Bluegrass-, Mark O'Connor, Richard Green, Byron Berline, Bill Monroe, Laurie Lewis, Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer, Stuart Duncan, Alison Krause, Kenny Baker, Chubby Wise, Bobby Hicks, Aubrie Hayney, etc. Celtic– Bonnie Rideout, Alasdair Fraser, Natalie McMaster, Kevin Burke, the Chieftains, etc. Old-Time and folk– Peter Ostroushko, Dean Magraw, Matt Glaser, Fiddle Fever, many anthologies of old mountain music, Jay Ungar, Molly Mason, Doc Watson, John Hartford. Jazz– Randy Sabien, Martin Norgaard, Mark O'Connor, Stephan Grappelli, Stuff Smith, John Blake

**Music Stores:** Shar Products, Elderly Instruments, Herb David Guitar Studio, **Magazines(also have websites):** Fiddlers Magazine, Mandolin Magazine, Bluegrass Unlimited, Dirty Linen

**Websites with links:** <http://www.angelfire.com/ak2/bluegrassmusic1/links.html>, <http://Elderly.com>, <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Realm/5747/thelinks.html>, <http://mandolincafe.com/links.html>, <http://www.markoconnor.com/>, <http://www.randysabien.com>, <http://www.nmpa.org/links.html>, <http://www.a2ark.org>, <http://www.salinefiddlers.com>, [www.mariachiconnection.com](http://www.mariachiconnection.com), [www.fiddlersrestrung.com](http://www.fiddlersrestrung.com)