A + E = T

No, this article will not rival Einstein's Theory of Relativity ($E=MC^2$). For the wind instrument player, however, A + E = T may be more relevant. Simply stated, A (Air) + E (Embouchure) = T (Tone). Tone quality on a musical wind instrument is determined by two major factors: air (speed and direction), and embouchure. In this issue of Kjos Band News, we've examined the flute embouchure (and will address other wind instrument embouchures in subsequent issues). Now let's examine air.

In addition to tone quality, air support dramatically affects intonation, articulation, range, and endurance. If there is a deficiency in any one of these areas, the first place to look for the source of the problem is air support. Air speed and direction is controlled by:

1. posture
2. inhale
3. exhale

To ensure that good air support is achieved, have the students do the following:

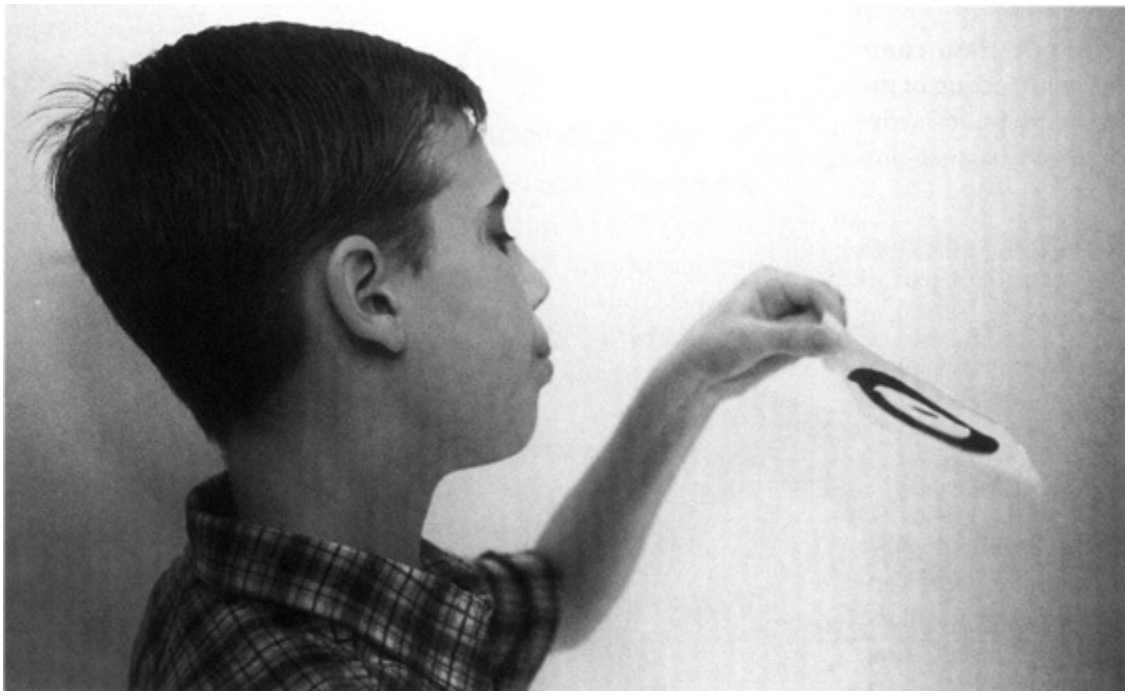
Posture

1. Sit on the edge of their chair so that they feel as though they are standing. This will require the students to have some of their weight on their feet. Their body should feel relaxed.
2. Have chin parallel to the floor.
3. Elbows should be at a 45° angle to the body.

Inhale

1. Throat should be relaxed with a large oral cavity. This can best be achieved by duplicating a yawn.
2. Place left hand on stomach and the right hand (with thumb forward) over the kidney area. Tell the students that this is the area of their body that should expand if they are breathing correctly.
3. All inhale techniques should be in the context of playing their instrument. Here are three different ways to teach correct breathing:
    A. Without making a sound, inhale through the mouth as if making a low-pitched "ah".
    B. Inhale (silently) the word "how".
    C. While making an embouchure, hold your index finger under your nose.

Exhale



Most inexperienced wind instrument players play their instruments with insufficient air speed that is poorly focused. To correct this problem, have the students draw a target on a small piece of paper (4 1/4" x 5 2) and after inhaling have them blow at the paper and hit the center of the target.

To motivate students and to discover which students are using their air (inhale and exhale) properly have a contest where students blow at the target to move the paper from a vertical position to a horizontal position and hold it in that position the longest time. The winner(s) is usually the student who is inhaling and exhaling properly.

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