#4. Heads UP!

About the Author

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This is a particular problem that I see in 80% of younger players in the band rooms I visit. It is a simple problem to fix and reinforces a proper disproportional embouchure (less top, more bottom), plus allows the possibility for more support to the sound.

What to instruct: Make sure your student’s teeth are on the top of the mouthpiece while she/he is playing (double lip is almost never taught to young players in band programs). Have the student play C1. Grab the barrel and pull it up towards you until their chin is almost parallel with the floor. Not only will this put more focus in the sound, it will put a little bit of pressure on the top teeth against the mouthpiece thus freeing up the reed just slightly from the bottom lip.

Reinforcement techniques: Before they play, have them find a spot on the wall across from them that they can stare at, forcing them to get their heads up. Also, have them use their left thumb to slightly push their clarinet up so the mouthpiece will push against their top teeth. When you see them putting their heads down, just walk over and pull their barrel out towards you. If their teeth are on top of the mouthpiece, it will not hurt them at all, and they will get the idea pretty quickly.