



POVERTY, BARRIERS, MUSIC & SUCCESS

Digital handout available at
www.donstinson.net/midwest

DON STINSON

SCENARIO: No Equipment, New Shoes

A student approaches you. They want to continue playing in the band for their junior year. They no longer have an instrument. The instrument company repossessed the instrument. They tell you that their parents cannot afford an instrument. You loan the student a clarinet and supply them with reeds, cork grease, and a cleaning swab. They say thank you. Two weeks later, they come to class wearing new shoes. You've seen these shoes in the store before: they cost \$250 a pair. What do you think, say, or do? Or, if you've experienced this, what did you do?

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

Low-income or Underserved Status isn't An
Excuse

We Can Chase Success By Identifying and
Adapting to Our Dysfunction

Everyone's Life Will Be Easier When We
Focus On What We Can Actually Control

Money Helps, Just Not As Much As We
Think

INTRODUCTION: HOW THIS ALL STARTED/THE “GHETTO” BAND





MY PROGRAM

A Short History

Where Are We Now?

SOME UNCOMMON PROCEDURES

We don't have everyone at rehearsals.

We have beginners in our auditioned ensemble.

Sometimes, our musicians just get up during rehearsal.

We provide autonomy and opportunities for student leadership due to our "complain twice rule."

SOME UNCOMMON PROCEDURES

We supply *everything*.

Sometimes, kids leave early.

Many of our students play multiple instruments.

We don't have a common assessment.

Sometimes, we don't even get to the literature in class.

WHY AM I PRESENTING?

Bio: Former Low-
Income Kid

A Case Study in
Dysfunction

Practicing
Teacher At My
Alma Mater

MY FAMILY TREE



POVERTY “CULTURE.”

Actions Taken By
Those In Poverty
Are Coping
Mechanisms, Not
Culture



THE CATEGORIES OF POVERTY

Absolute	Unable to obtain basic living needs.
Relative	Falls below the average standard of living in their area.
Generational	Two or more generations being born into poverty. ¹

THE CATEGORIES OF POVERTY

Rural	Families in poverty in areas of 50,000 or less
Urban	Families in poverty in areas of 50,000 or more.
Situational	Sudden events leading to a fall below the poverty line.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO BE POOR?

Money, and time.
Mostly time.

Buy Nice Or Buy
Twice: Not An
Option



MINIMUM WAGE: BREAKING DOWN THE MATH

ITEM	DOLLAR AMOUNT	HOURS TO EARN UNDER MW (PRE-TAX)
Box of Vandoren Clarinet Reeds	\$24.99	2.08 hours
One 30 minute Private Vocal Lesson	\$20	1.67 hours
One Violin Bow	\$45.99	3.83
Bach Student Trumpet	\$700	58.3
Disney Trip	\$1100	91.67

SCENARIO: A Low-Quality Instrument And An Angry Parent

A student walks into your class with a new instrument. She is very excited. She begins playing in your class, and you notice that something doesn't sound right. As the class period goes on, the student starts having mechanical issues with the instrument. After class, you ask to see her instrument. You immediately recognize that this is a low-quality instrument that may not hold up. You tell the student that you have another instrument that she can use for your class. The next morning, you walk into your room. The student's parents have left an angry voicemail. They explain that they saved up money for this instrument and that their daughter will be playing on this instrument in class. They are upset that you don't realize how hard they worked to get this instrument, and they explain that their daughter was embarrassed by the situation.

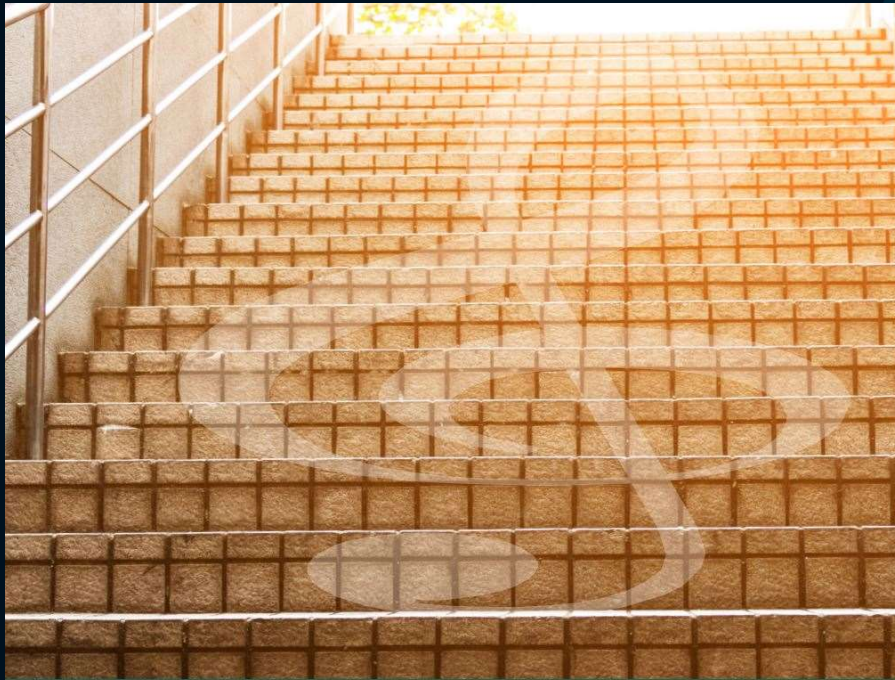
How do you respond to the parents? Do you speak to the student about this?

DYSFUNCTION

One Step At A Time
Maslow Matters
Attendance Issues



DYSFUNCTION: KEY TERMS



- **Dysfunction:** something that doesn't work the way that it should.
- **Congruence:** agreement or harmony; compatible.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

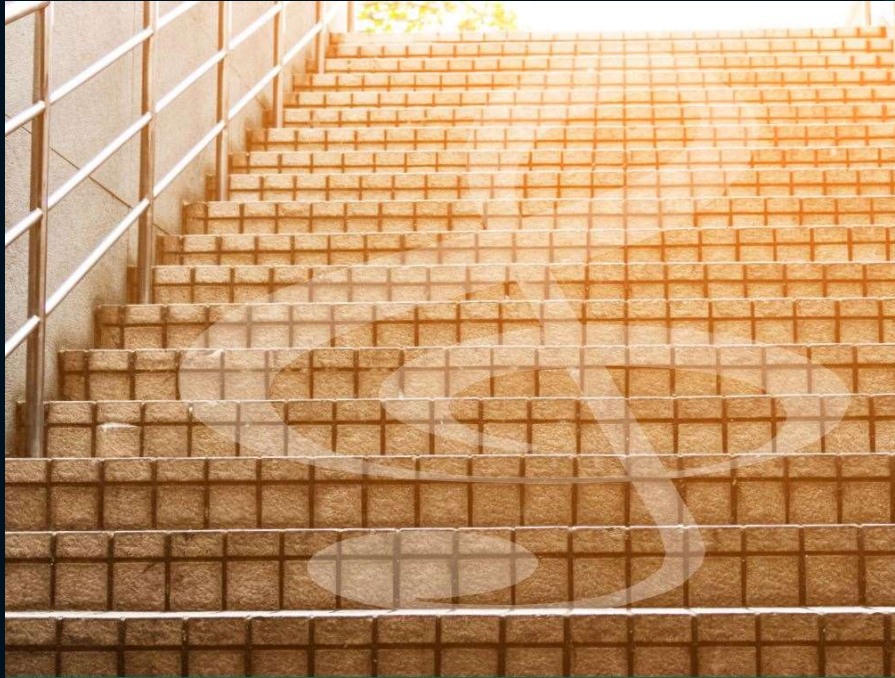
Fill In The Gaps

Relate

Let The Music Fit
The Student, And
Not The Other
Way Around



DYSFUNCTION



- Assume Nothing – They Don't Know What They Don't Know
- Rushing Progress Is Like Screaming At A Tree To Grow.

WE DON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING

What We Aren't

- Guidance Counselors
- Psychologists
- Social Workers

SCENARIO: A Music Trip Extension and a Case of Beer

A parent calls to explain her financial situation. She explains that money is extremely tight this month and she needs an extension on the band trip payment. She is crying. You work out an extension, allowing her an additional three weeks to get the money. She is extremely thankful. That evening, you go to the store to pick up some groceries. You see the parent and her husband in the store and say hello. You notice two cases of beer in the cart. What do you think, say, or do?

DETERMINING NEGOTIABLES

When everything is special, nothing is special.

Non-Negotiables

Students cannot miss without penalty.
Teacher can reasonably expect the school and community to attend the event with little to no barrier.

Negotiables

A negotiable event can run with 75% of the group but is still considered important.

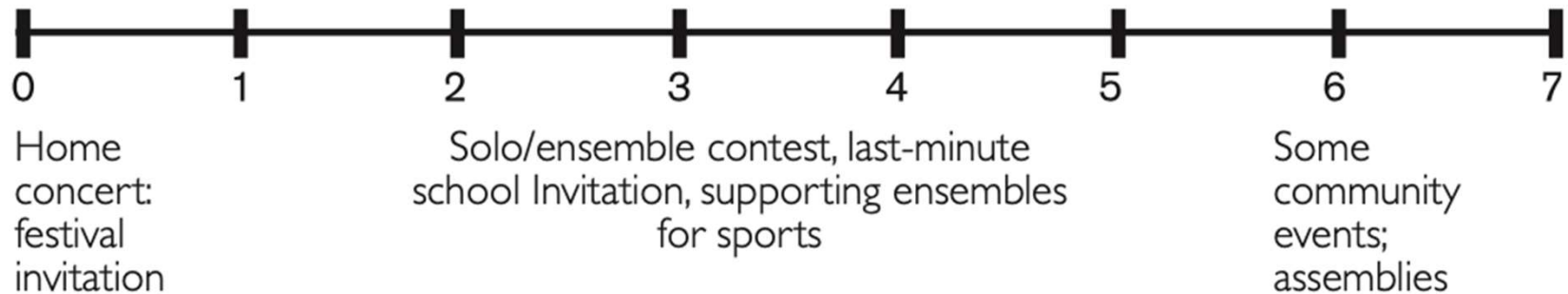
Optional

Optional events are truly optional: individual and collective grades, reputation, and experience will not be affected if we commit to participate.

DETERMINING NEGOTIABLES

Non-Negotiable

Negotiable

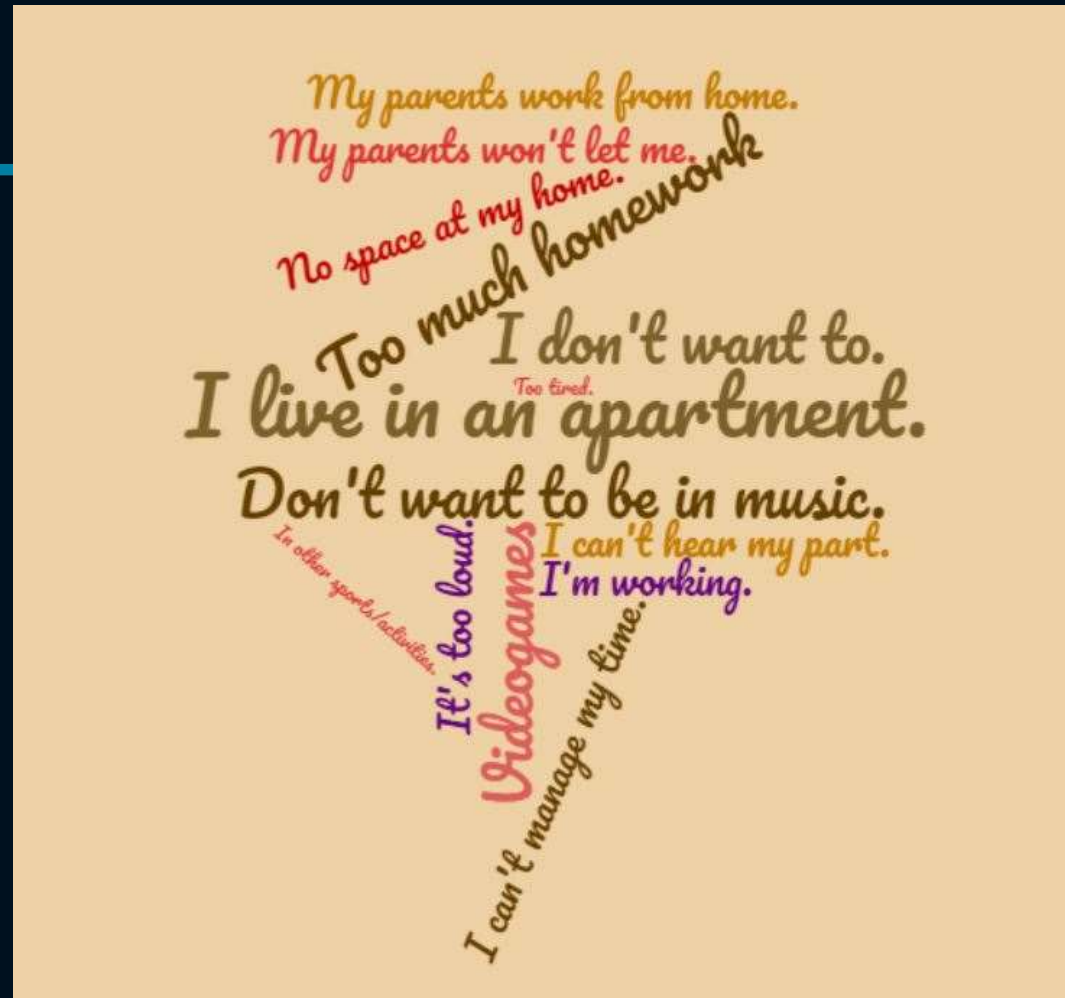


PRACTICING NOT REQUIRED

Who's Got Time,
Anyway?



WHY DON'T KIDS PRACTICE?



SOME MYTHS

- Upper And Middle Class Kids Practice More
- Students **NEED** to practice outside of school!
- They Won't Get Any Better If They Don't Practice Outside Of School
- Children And Parents Are Completely Honest On Practice Logs

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Reevaluate & Establish Goals
- Reevaluate & Establish Routines
- Treat Music Class Like An Athletic Practice
- Exercise The “Big Lifts.”
- Treat the rehearsal and classroom time as sacred – no “free” days.

GOAL SETTING

- You Might Not Be Able To Do It All
- My Goal? Playing On Professional Stages As A Group.
- You Don't Need The Same Goals Every Year

ROUTINE AND LITERATURE BREAKDOWN

Aug-Nov	Nov-Dec	January	Feb-March	April-May
75% Routine	50% Routine	65% Routine	50% Routine	25% Routine
25% Literature	50% Literature	35% Literature	50% Literature	75% Literature

ELEMENTS OF EVERY ROUTINE

- The Basics: Tone, Articulation, etc.
- Sight-reading
- Transposition
- Theory

HOW DO YOU GET THROUGH EVERYTHING?

- Pick The Method Book(s) That Work For You
- Think “Compound Lifts.”
- Select Music At, Above, And Below Your Grade Level.
- Don't Let The Concert Dictate Everything!

COMPOUND LIFTS TRANSLATED TO MUSIC

- Foundations For Superior Performance Pg. 3
 - Primary Goal: Articulation On A Concert F.
 - Add Drone In The Background: Unison Intonation.
 - Woodwinds Switch To A Concert C And Play 2 Cents Sharp And Trombones Play The Third Down: Chord Intonation
 - Add Crescendo And Decrescendos For Dynamic Training.

MUSIC SELECTION

- Select Music At, Above, And Below Your Grade Level
- My "Auditioned" Group Is A Grade 4 Band Out Of 6:
 - One Grade 4 Piece
 - One Grade 5 (Multi-movement)
 - One Grade 2
 - One Grade 3.5

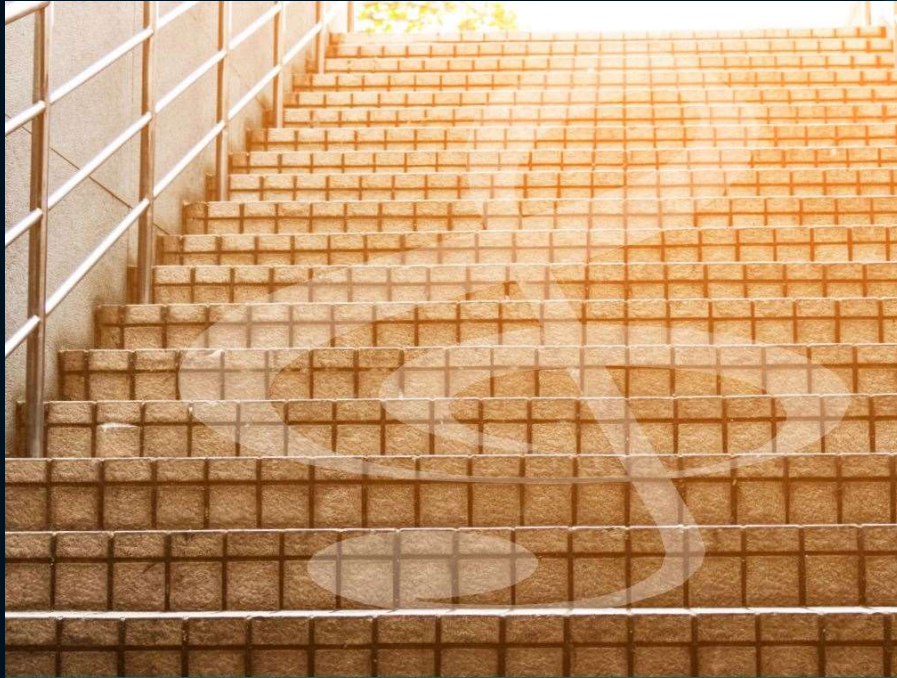
WHAT ABOUT CONCERT WEEK?

- A Change In Routine May Stress Kids Out More
- Sight-reading On The Day Of The Concert
- A Group Directly Reflects You!

PRACTICING NOT REQUIRED

- **Get The Kids Involved In Goal Setting**
- **Save The Classics For The Classroom**
- **Let Them Manage Their Time: My Kids Get Up And Leave**
- **Tone And Intonation Issues Are Unforgivable**

RULES? WHAT RULES?



- You Have Permission To Break The “Rules.”
- Altering Parts Based On Attendance/Experience
- The Composer’s Ensemble Doesn’t Exist.
- Seating/Placement Is Negotiable

PRACTICING NOT REQUIRED

**Spoiler: The Kids
May Actually
Practice More In
This Method**

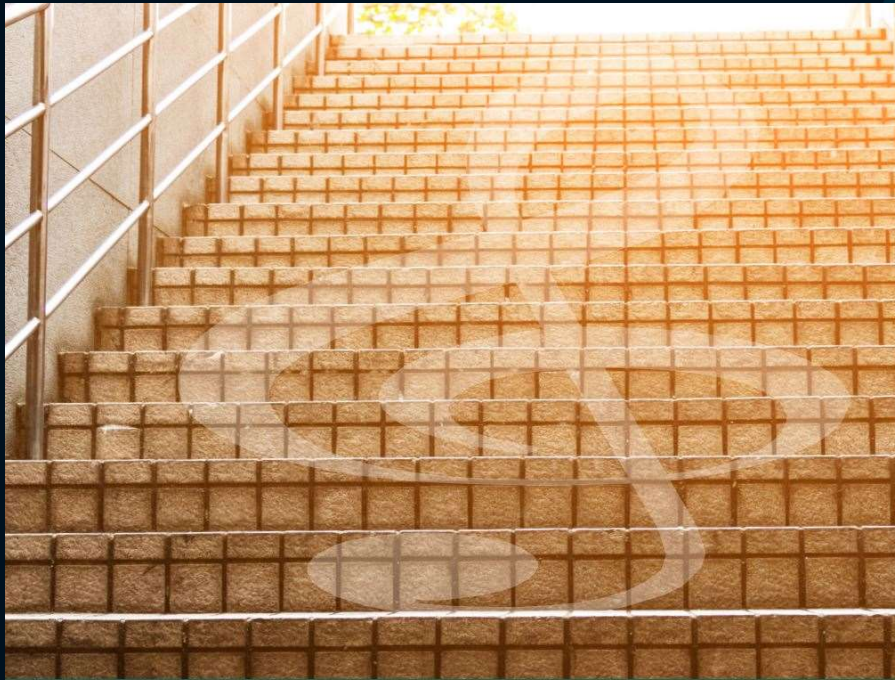


MONEY

THERE'S ALWAYS MONEY
SOMEWHERE
IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING
ASK FOR MORE THAN
WHAT YOU WANT
HAVE SOMEONE ELSE BUY IT

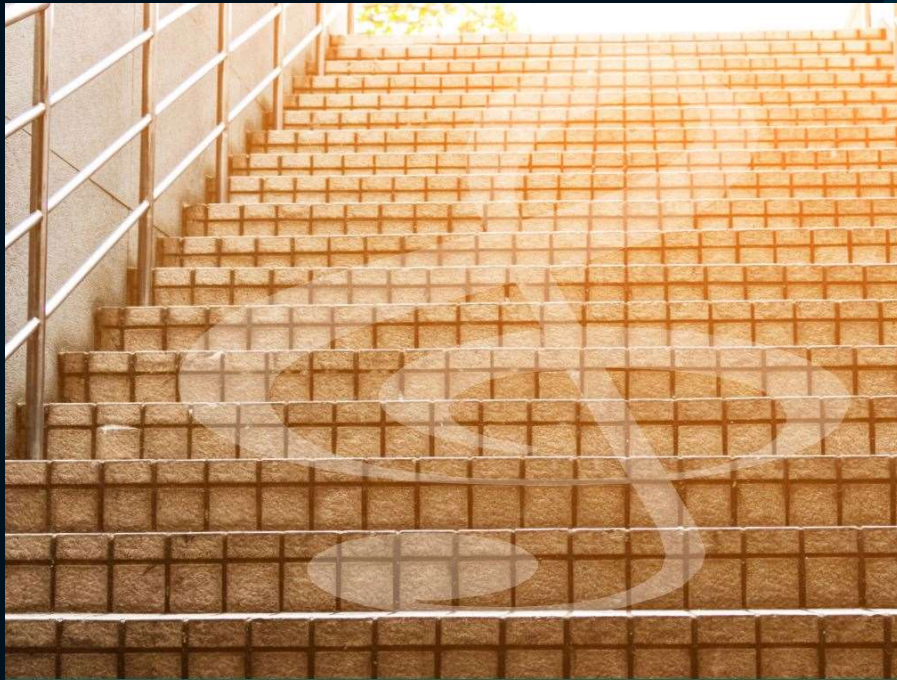


MONEY



- It's Not Your Job To Care About Other Programs
- Emotion is Fine, But Data Works
- How to Ask For Money

SOME FINAL MONEY TIPS



- Get Someone Else To Pay
- Capital Outlay, Building Repair Budgets
- Maintain or Improve Administrative Relationships

TALKING WITH ADMINISTRATORS

Rapport

Problems Should Come With Possible Solutions

You Have Two Minutes

Timing Means Everything

Don't Retaliate; Don't Take It Personally

SCENARIO: Missing A Festival For Prom

A student moves into your school during her senior year. She had spent from preschool to junior year in her previous school district, and family circumstances forced a move right at the start of her senior year. In May, a state-level festival selects your group for a performance. This festival happens to be on the same day as the prom at the student's old school. A week before the festival, this student asks to miss the festival to go to the dance. What do you do?

“Must Be Nice...”

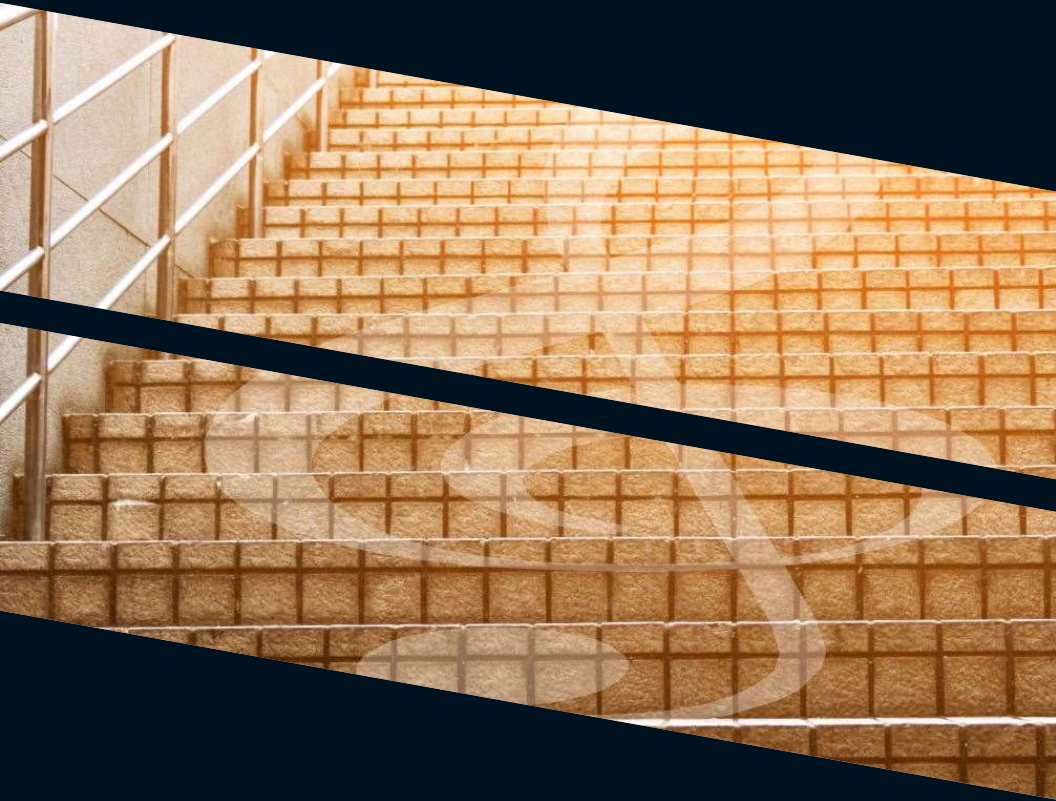
Avoiding Resentment

- **Avoid “It Must Be Nice.”**
- **Teach The Kids In Your Room, Not The Ones You Wish You Had**
- **Be Proud Of Where You Come From**

The background of the slide is a photograph of a brick wall. Overlaid on the left side of the wall is a dark blue geometric shape, possibly a stylized 'Z' or a series of parallel lines, which frames the title text. The title text is white with a thin black outline.

THE HARD REALITIES OF TEACHING MUSIC

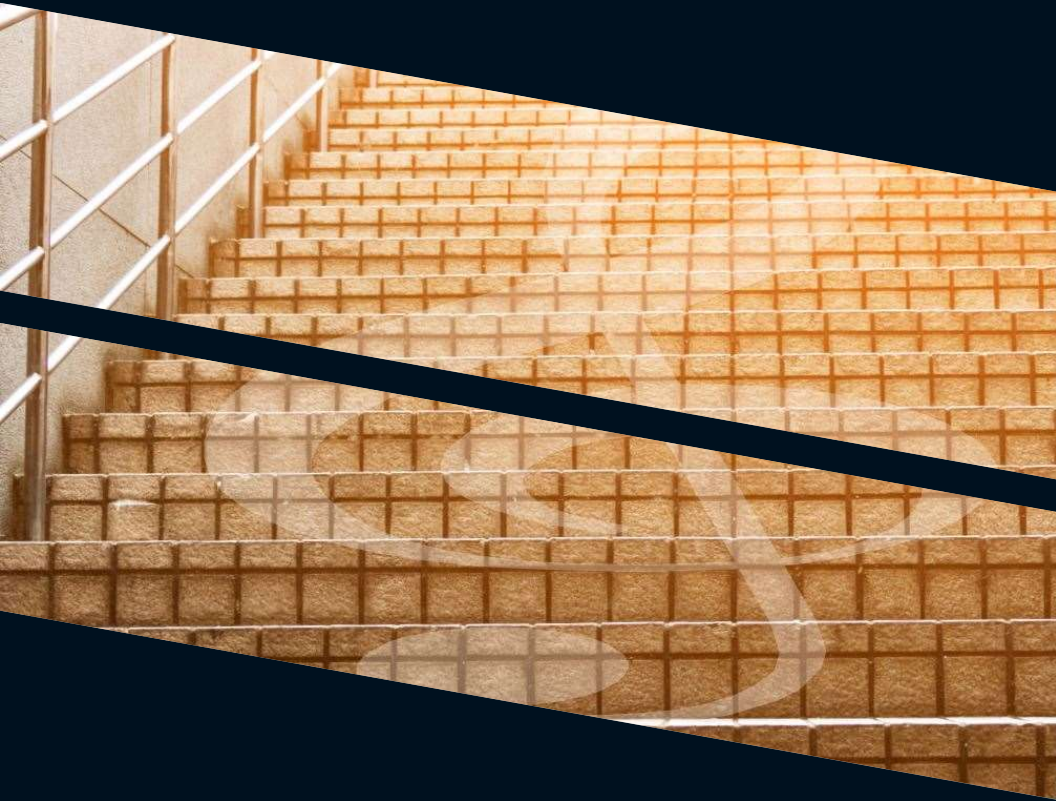
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HARD REALITY

Our Status Cannot Be Used An Excuse For Progress And Success.

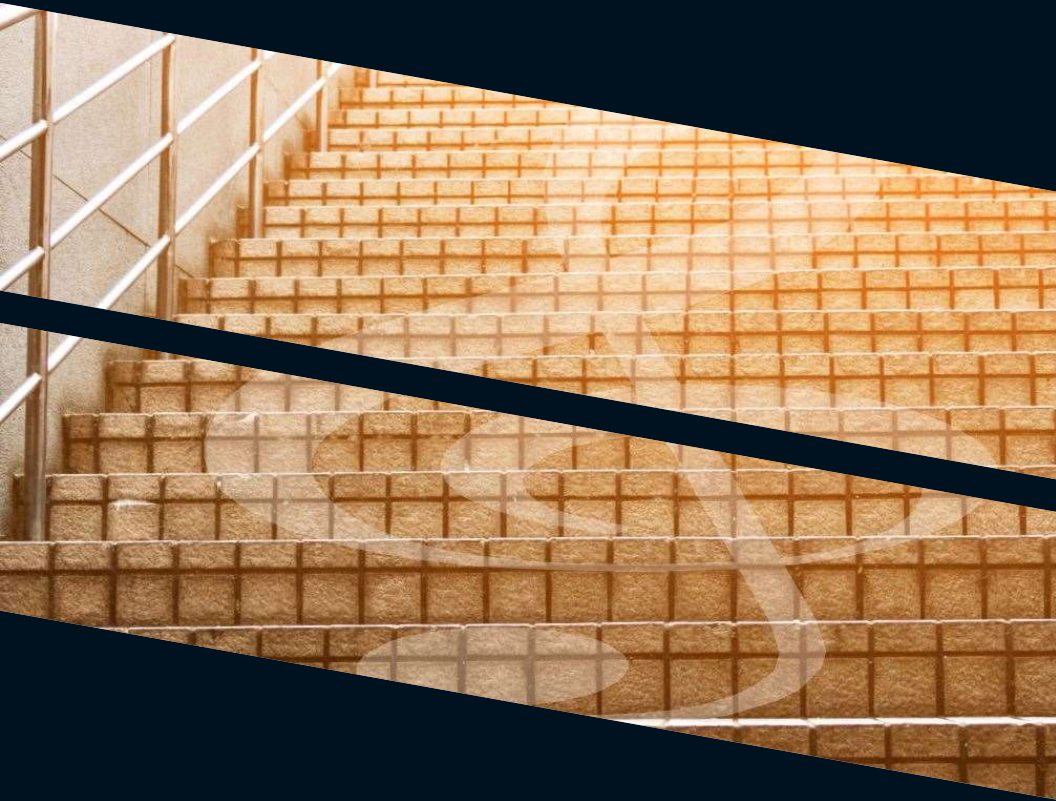
- **Flipside: We Have The Same Capacity To Learn And Grow, Just Like Everyone Else.**



HARD REALITY

No One Will Care As Much As You Do About Where Your Kids Are Coming From.

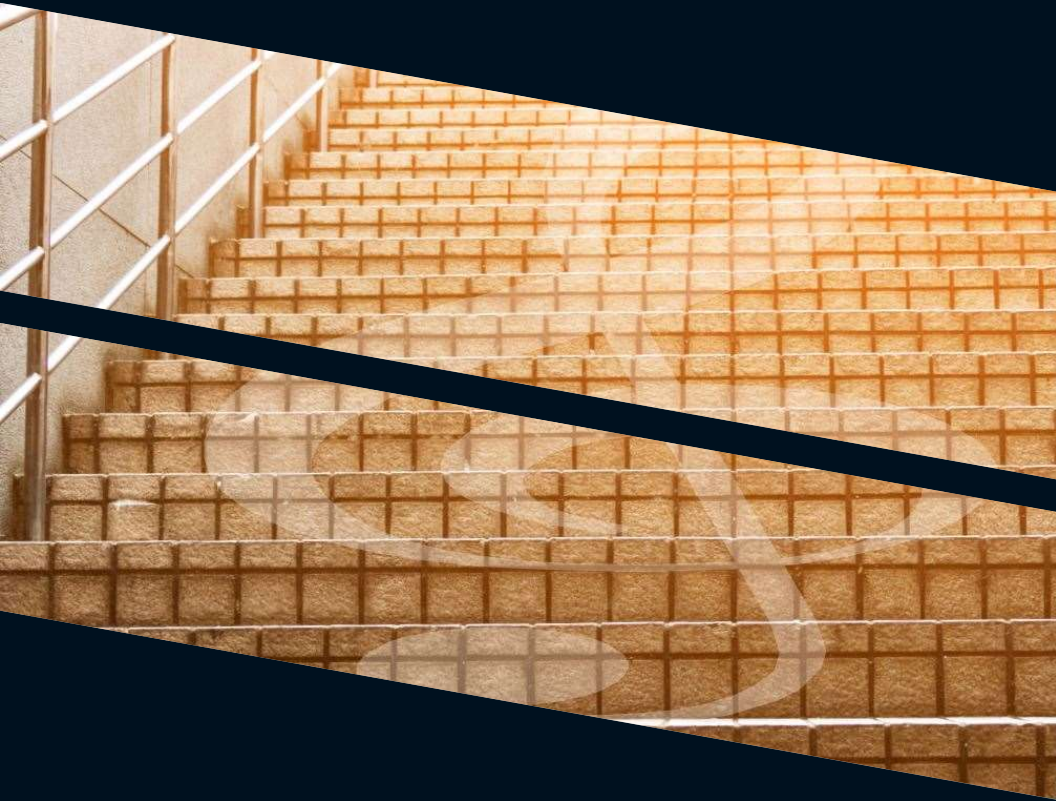
- **Flipside:** Once we remove external validation seeking, we can focus on what really matters.



HARD REALITY

Math, Science, and English will always win.

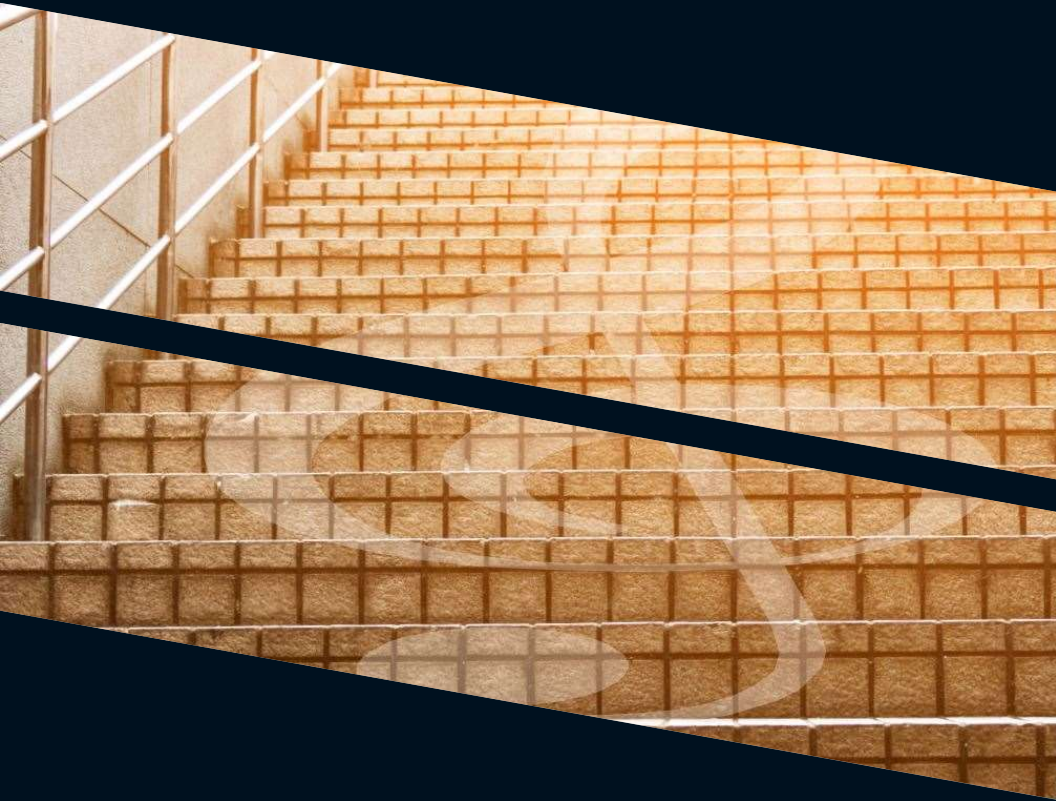
- However, we can work to stay ahead of the curve.



HARD REALITY

Critical Thinking Is Overrated.

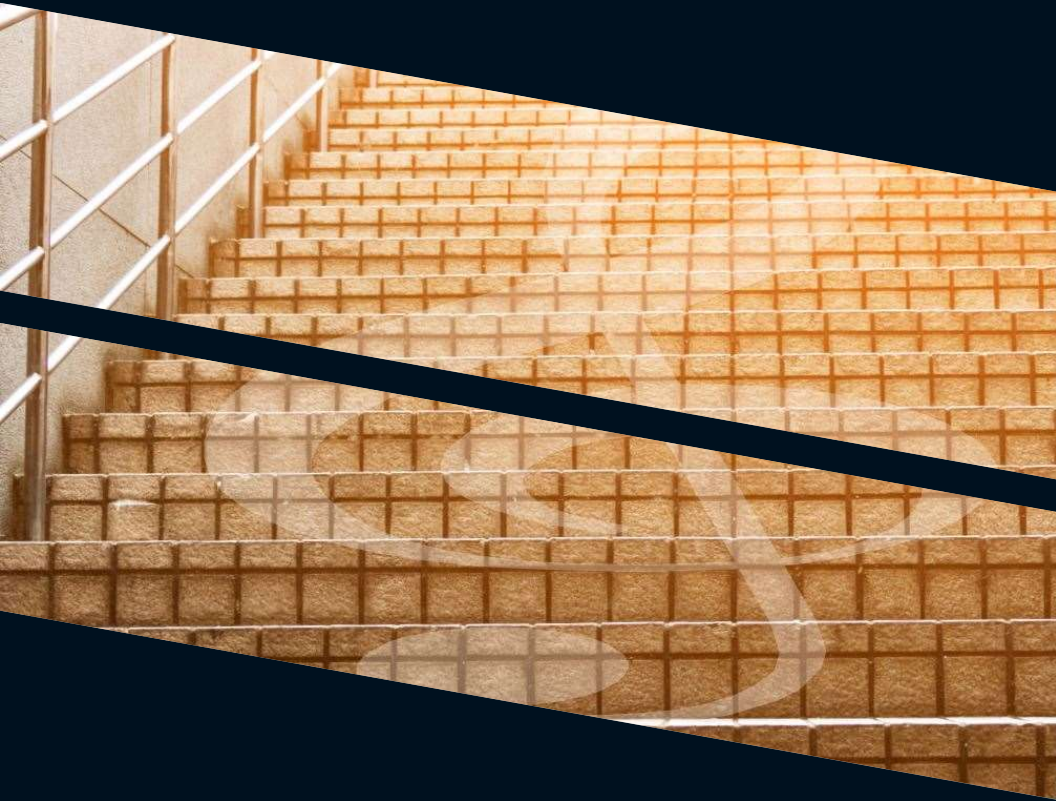
- Flipside: We're doing fine and working to eliminate dysfunction.



HARD REALITY

**A Goal That You Know
That You Or Your
Group Knows That
They Can Achieve Is
Not A Good Goal.**

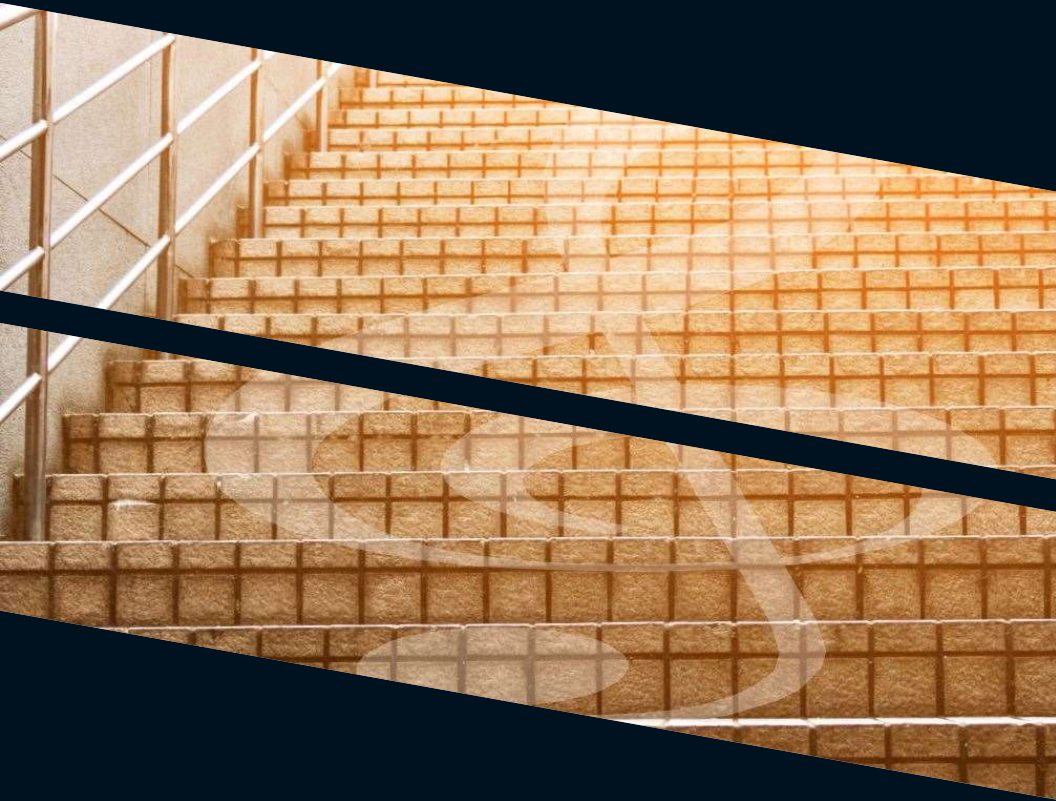
- **You'll Never Lose Going
After An Appropriate
Goal**



HARD REALITY

Students That Don't Like You Won't Behave For You.

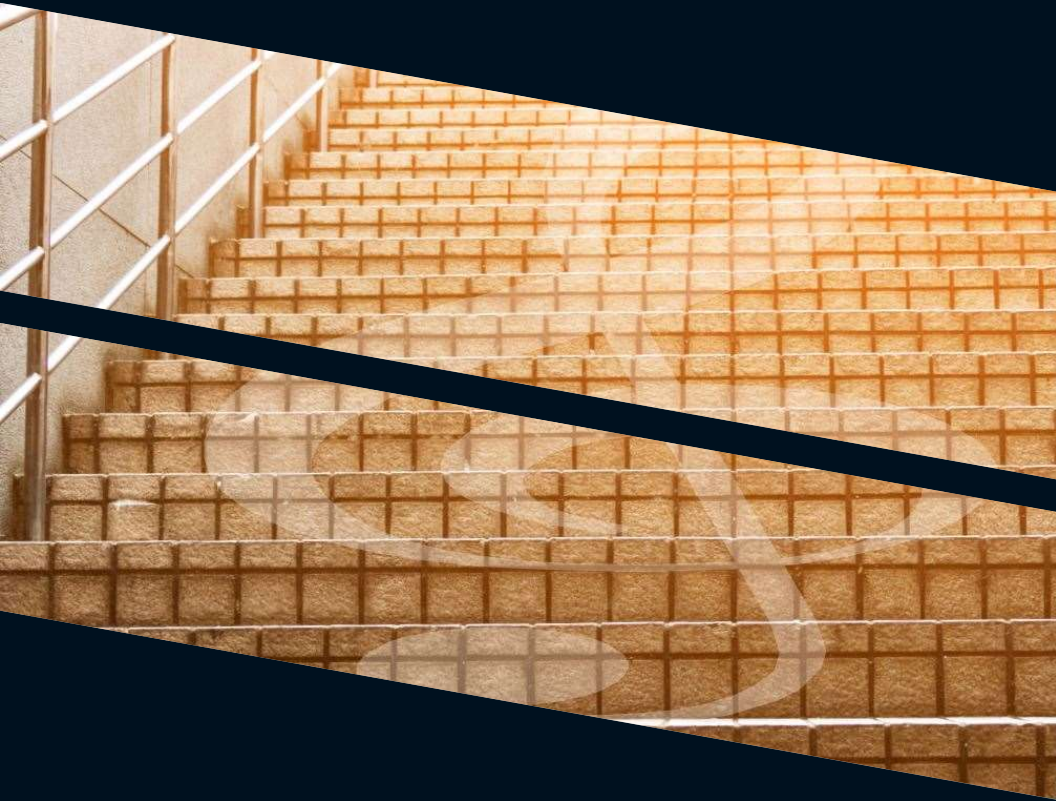
- **Flipside: Students That Like You Will Go To The Ends Of The Earth To Support You And Your Program**



HARD REALITY

Kids Will Test You To See If You're The Real Deal

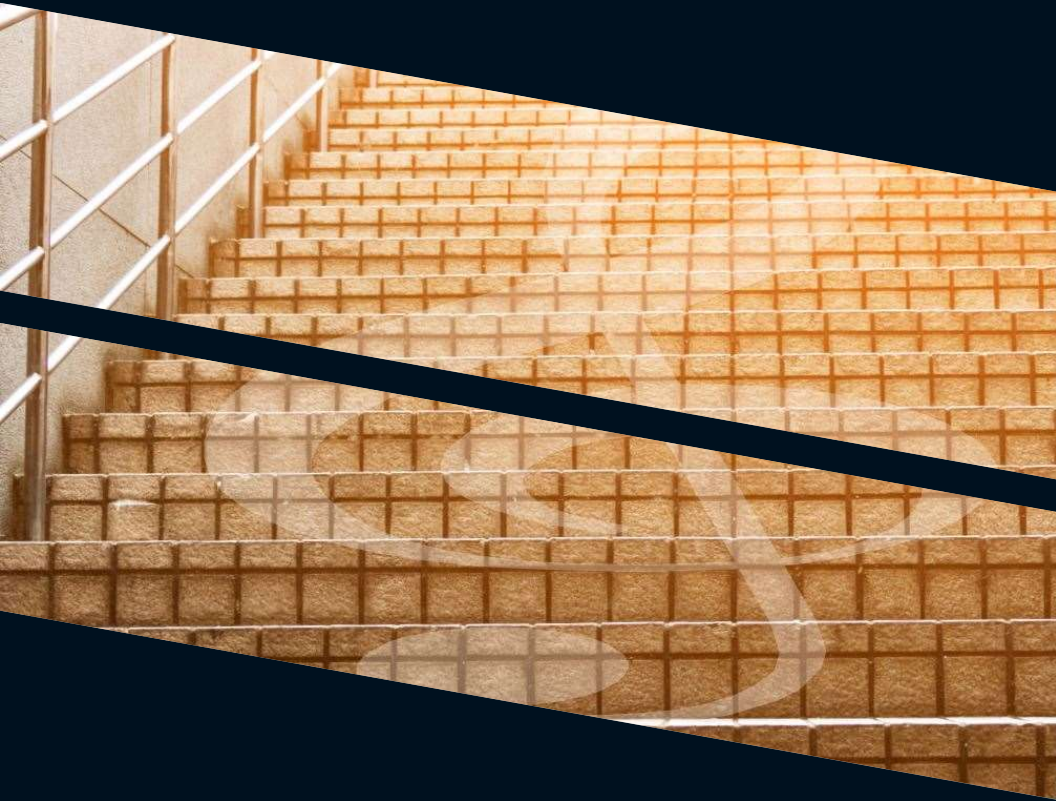
- **Flipside: You Are The Real Deal, And Passing These Tests Will Benefit The Student.**



HARD REALITY

You Won't Like Every Student; Also, They Will Know When You Don't Like Them.

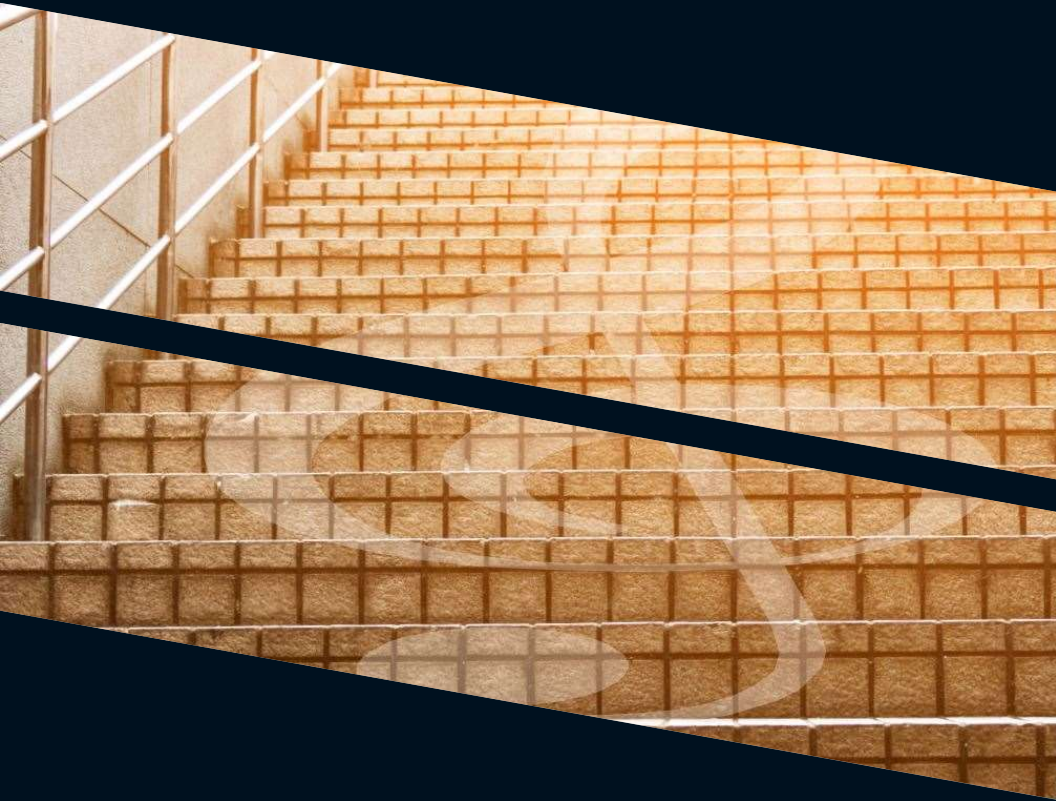
- **Flipside: Families Fight, But They Work Together.**



HARD REALITY

Music Making Needs To Be At the Core; We Need To Stop Reminding Students Every Five Minutes That They Have Problems.

- **Flipside: We Can Provide An Experience That Can Elevate Students With Authentic And Artistic Contributions.**

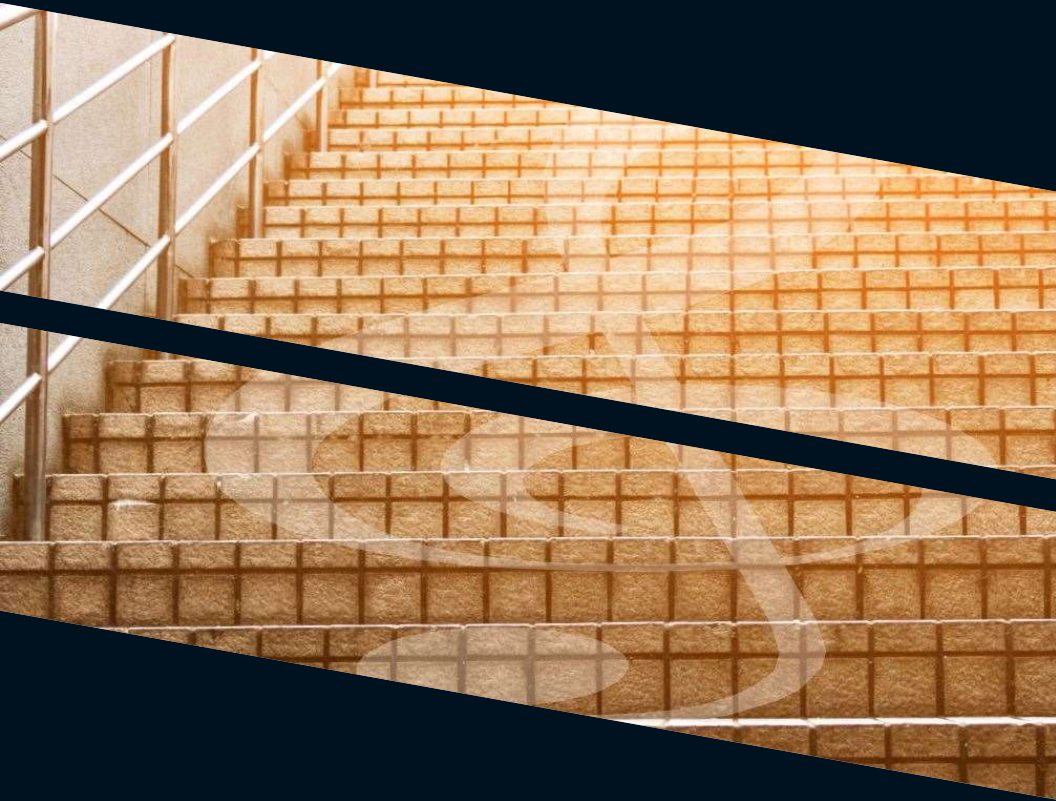


HARD REALITY

People Have Two Responses To Complaining:

1. They Don't Care.
2. They're Just Glad It's Not Happening To Them.

- Positive Flipside: People Will Help When You Are Clear With Your Requests.



HARD REALITY

An ensemble or classroom is a direct reflection of its director/teacher.

- **Positive Flipside:** an ensemble or classroom is a direct reflection of its director/teacher.

SPECIAL THANKS

GIA Publications

American School Band Directors Association

Yamaha Education Suite

Questions? Reach out to
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