

Wait! Don't Go! Improving Retention in School Bands and Orchestras

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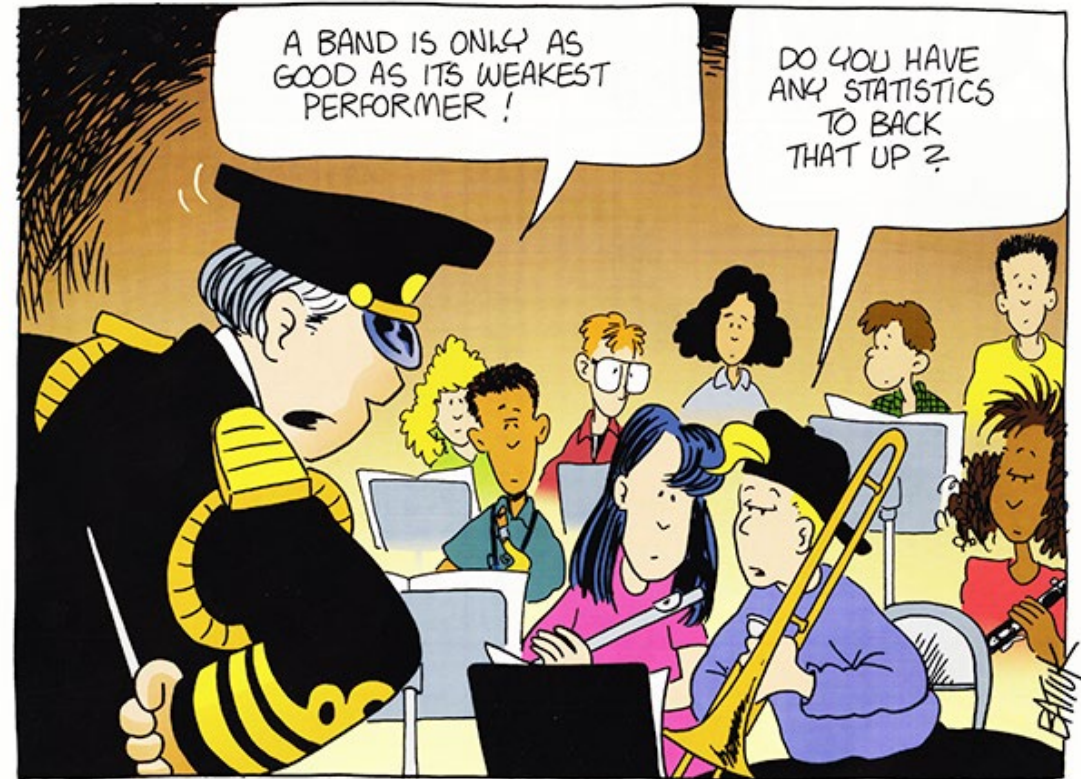
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Basic Principles

- What we worry about most (?)
- Retention unique to music ed
- Everything we do daily has the potential to affect retention
- We only recruit ONCE
- No magic bullet
- Approach retention systematically



Band/Orchestra Enrollments

Texas: fall 2017 – fall 2023

| Grade | Band <i>N</i> | Band % | Orchestra <i>N</i> | Orchestra % |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 6 | 127,995 | 100% | 30,768 | 100% |
| 7 | 73,357 | 57% | 19,506 | 63% |
| 8 | 55,767 | 44% | 20,116 | 65% |
| 9 | 36,633 | 29% | 11,635 | 38% |
| 10 | 23,890 | 19% | 7,797 | 25% |
| 11 | 21,870 | 17% | 6,050 | 20% |
| 12 | 19,301 | 15% | 5,113 | 17% |
| Attrition | (-108,694) | (-85%) | (-25,655) | (-83%) |

Band Enrollment & The Pandemic

Illinois & Michigan (2019-20 to 2020-21)

Illinois

- 78% of programs experienced attrition; Avg. Loss = -28%
 - Beginners (any grade) = -40%
 - Middle School = -20%
 - High School = -8%
- Higher (- 26%) vs. Lower (- 16%) poverty schools
- Not count students who quit during 2020-21

Michigan

- Middle School: -28%
- High School: -20%
- Greater loss for programs using virtual instruction in 2020-21



Why Students Quit: Research Summary

- **Practical**
 - Class schedule, other interests/responsibilities
 - Cost of participation
 - Transportation
 - Instrument size/condition
- **Personal**
 - Music self concept
 - Low recognition of efforts
 - Don't like the repertoire
 - Bored or overwhelmed



- **Influence of others**
 - Friends not in band/orchestra
 - Lack of encouragement from parents, classroom teachers, or director
 - 73% of dropouts never contacted
 - Negative feedback from peers
 - Low status of band/orchestra
 - Bullying

Social Consequences

STUDY #1 (1995)

- Prestige Ratings of HS Activities (scale = 1-10)
 - Highest sport - HS Football = 9.1
 - Lowest sport - Men's Tennis = 5.5
 - Highest Rated non-sport – Student Council – 7.0
 - **Band/Orchestra = 4.5**
 - Vocational clubs = 4.4
 - Hobby Clubs = 4.3

STUDY #2 (1995)

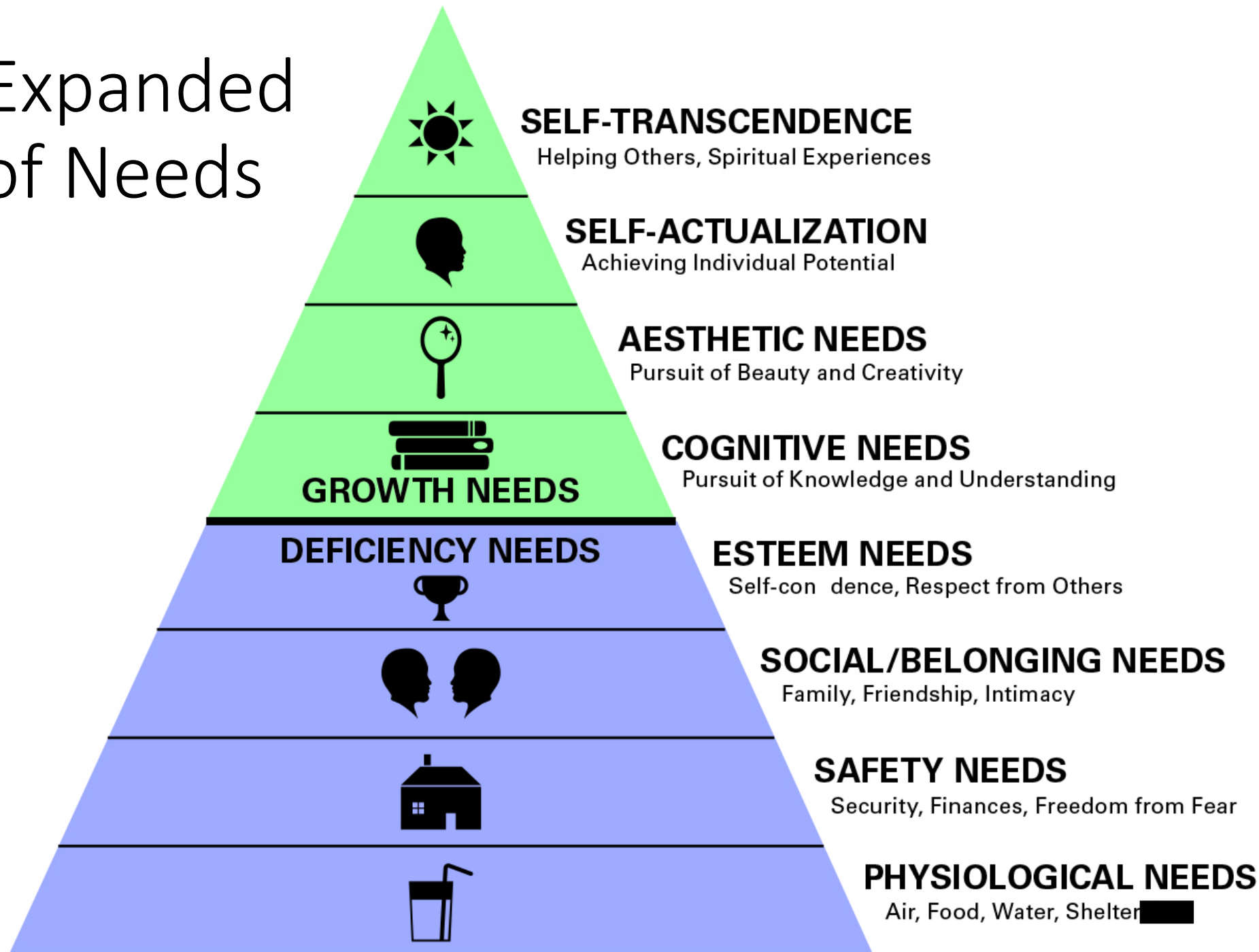
- Asked MS students:
 - “Who in your grade is most popular?”
 - “Who would you most like to be friends with?”
- Over 3 yrs, joining band in 6th grade and continuing caused 7th and 8th grade male and female popularity to decline.
- Fewer students listed them as “most popular” and “would you most like to be friends with.”

Bullying (Elpus & Carter: 2016, *JRME*)

- Music students more likely to experience in-person bullying vs. non-arts peers
 - Males = greatest risk of physical bullying
 - Females = greatest risk of social/relational bullying



Maslow – Expanded Hierarchy of Needs



Making Sense

- Every program & student unique
- We can influence (vs. change) others' attitudes
- Identify & solve challenges to participation
 - Willingness & courage to change
 - Focus on students' needs

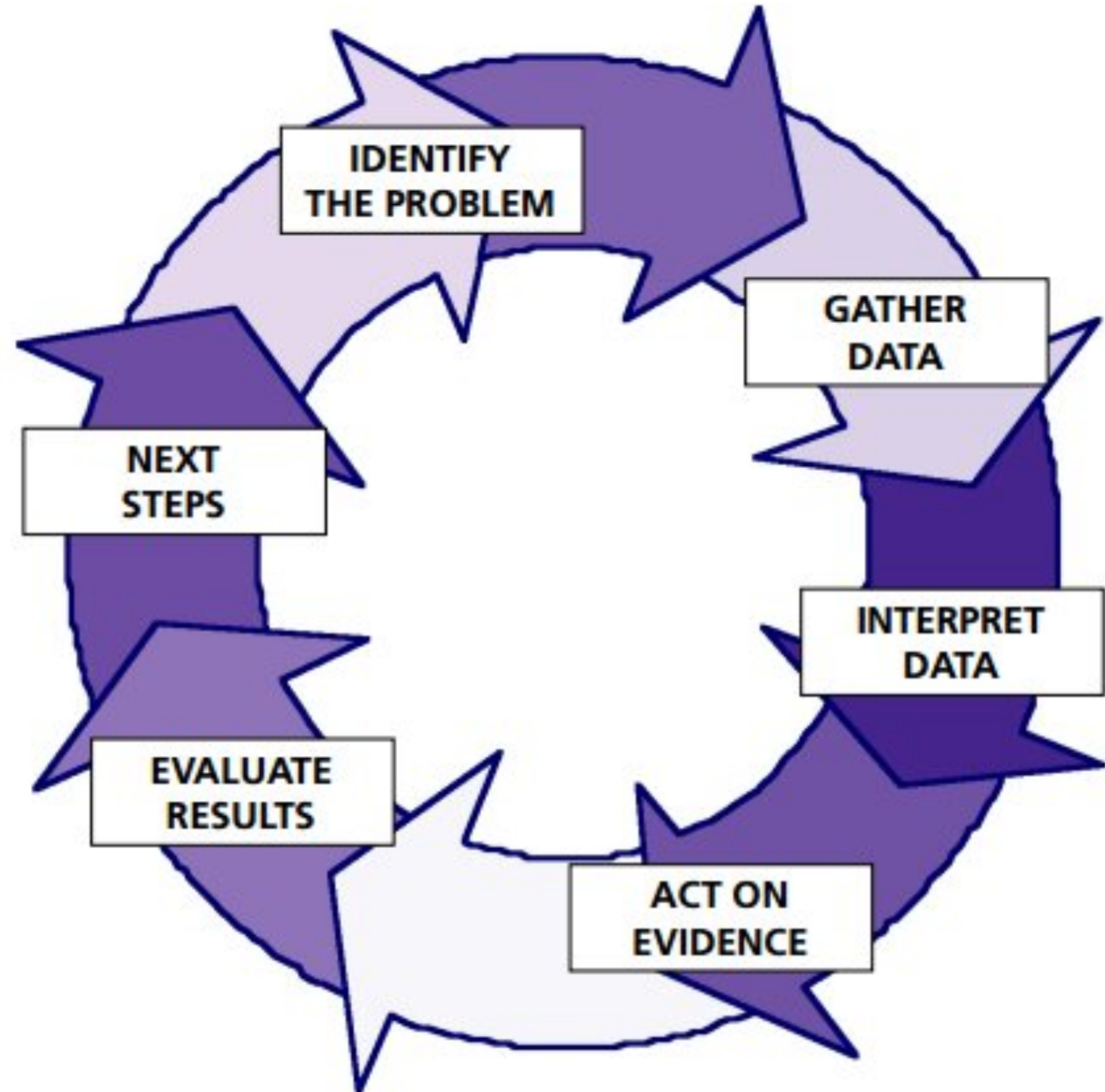


At Risk Students

- Seems disinterested
- Lack of progress/practice
- Forgetting instrument
- Parents not at concerts
- Poor school grades
- No friends in band/orchestra
- Late/absent class or performances
- Heavily involved in multiple activities



Action Research



Jones, B. D. (2012/2021, January). *User guide for assessing the components of the MUSIC® Model of Motivation*. Retrieved from <http://www.theMUSICmodel.com>



eMpowerment

Usefulness

Success

Interest

Caring

- Students feel empowered by having the ability to make decisions about their learning
- Students understand why what they are learning is useful for their short- or long-term goals
- Students believe that they can succeed if they put forth the effort
- Students are interested in the content and instructional activities
- Students believe that others in the learning environment care about their learning and them as a person

eMUSIC Inventory

- Materials in Google:
 - Band/Orchestra specific form
 - Users' Guide w/ scoring instructions
- 18 Items (3-4 per component)
 - eMpowerment (5, 12, 16, 18)
 - Usefulness (1, 9, 13)
 - Success (2, 4, 7, 10)
 - Interest (6, 8, 17)
 - Caring (3, 11, 14, 15)
- Administer inventory intact as directed
- Good MMed project!

SCAN ME



Sample: Retention Survey Draft

- Personal Attitudes; Social Factors; Practical Considerations; Musical Progress
- Use & modify freely
- Change statements to past tense to survey students who left the program.
- Reading level around grade 6 or 7
 - Items might not be appropriate for elementary students.
 - Shorter sentences, fewer words, fewer syllables



Possible Action Steps - Scheduling

- Most valuable resources
 - Instruction time
 - Access to students
- Work out scheduling solutions
 - School
 - See D214 presentation in folder
 - Individual students
 - Examples of 4-yr plans in folder
 - HS – PE Waivers
- Middle School
 - Avoid exploratory period
 - Before/after school[?]

Plainfield North HS Sample 4-yr Plan

| <u>Freshman</u> | <u>Sophomore</u> | <u>Junior</u> | <u>Senior</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Music! | Music! | Music! | Music! |
| Lunch/SH | Lunch/SH | Lunch/SH | Lunch/SH |
| English | English | English | English |
| Health & Wellness | PE/Drivers Ed | <i>Elective</i> | <i>Elective</i> |
| Math | Math | Math | Econ/Gov't |
| Science | Science | US History | Science |
| World Lang. | World Lang. | Social Studies | <i>Elective</i> |

Possible Action Steps - Scheduling

- How many performances does your group do per year?
 - Consider volunteer athletic bands
 - Divide band in $\frac{1}{2}$ for pep band
 - Substitute small ensembles for some service commitments
- What would be students' reaction to fewer performances?



Possible Action Steps – Pullout Lessons & Starting Grade

- Compensate for instruction time
- Individual attention = progress
 - Progress = higher retention
- Reactions
 - Why is band/orch more important?
 - How does this affect me?
- Pullouts not detrimental to achievement
- Consider starting in gr 6 vs. 5



Possible Action Steps - Curriculum

- Implement CMP music activities
 - Listen, analyze, discuss
 - Compose (see handout for examples)
 - Small ensembles
 - Music theory
 - Music history & culture
- Ensembles ≠ general music
- How can CMP contribute to understanding & performance of repertoire?
- Play easier repertoire(?)



Possible Action Steps – Registration Process

- We only recruit ONCE
- Director turn in list of band students for next year
- Counselor add to students' schedules
- To drop – parents must contact director
- Know the families & ID students at risk of dropping out



Implementing Change: Administration

- ID the problem w/ data
- Present options w/ pros & cons
- Focus on what is best for students now vs. past practice & why
- Replace (vs. drop) performances
- Example – HS D214 in Google Folder



Implementing Change: Parents & Students

- Be proactive
- Share data & explanations
- Focus on why plan is best for student learning
- Parents want students to succeed





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YOU