

Beyond Compliance: Igniting Engagement in the Band Room

Michael Antmann

2025 Midwest International Band and Orchestra Conference



TDLR

Compliance isn't good enough.
Engagement is the goal.

Engagement vs. Compliance

Compliance	Engagement
Students participate to avoid consequences.	Students participate to learn and interact with content.
Leads to extrinsic motivation.	Leads to intrinsic motivation.
Studies/practices when it's necessary, typically for grades*	Studies/practices as the result of sincere interest, and the desire to improve and contribute.
Typically, doesn't volunteer to play or answer questions.	Feels safe to take chances, which lead to improvement.

Reactive vs. Proactive Classroom Management

Reactive

Addresses undesirable behaviors after they occur.

Disrupts instruction.

Rules/Consequences

Can create confrontational situations and can harm the student-teacher relationship

Proactive

Focuses on preventing undesirable behaviors.

Maximizes class time.

Expectations

Fosters a feeling of safety in a structured environment

Rules vs. Expectations

- Rules
 - Enforced with consequences
 - Not flexible
 - Compliance is the intended outcome
 - Intended to eliminate undesirable behaviors
- Expectations
 - Fostered with positive feedback and praise
 - Molds to the situation
 - Engagement and ownership are intended outcomes
 - Intended to encourage desirable behaviors

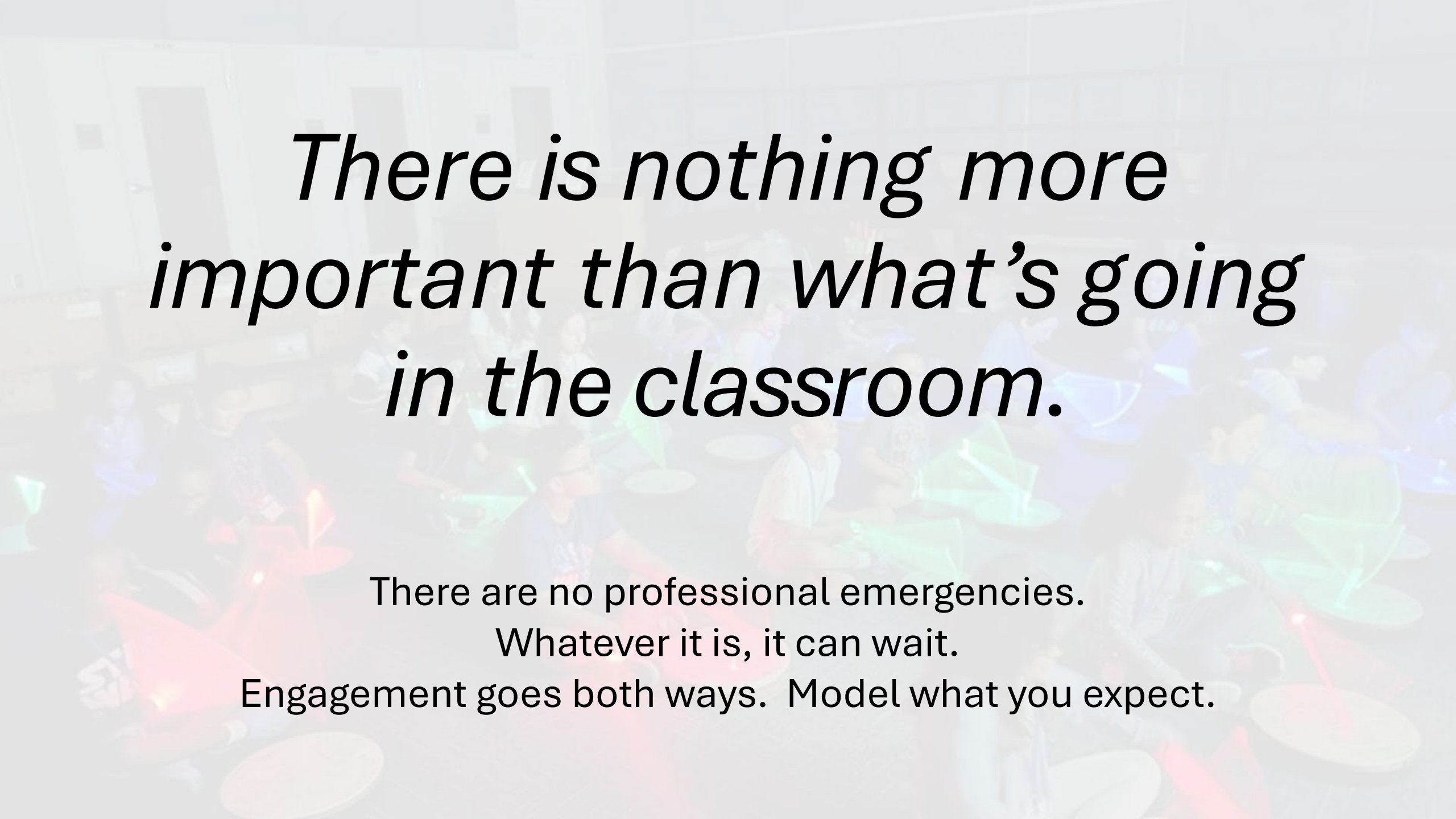


*Is it really necessary to
post rules on your
classroom wall?*

ENGAGEMENT

- Be Present
- Redirect and Reinforce
- Feedback
- Build Connections
- Be Consistent
- Trust
- Be Prepared
- Be Positive





*There is nothing more
important than what's going
in the classroom.*

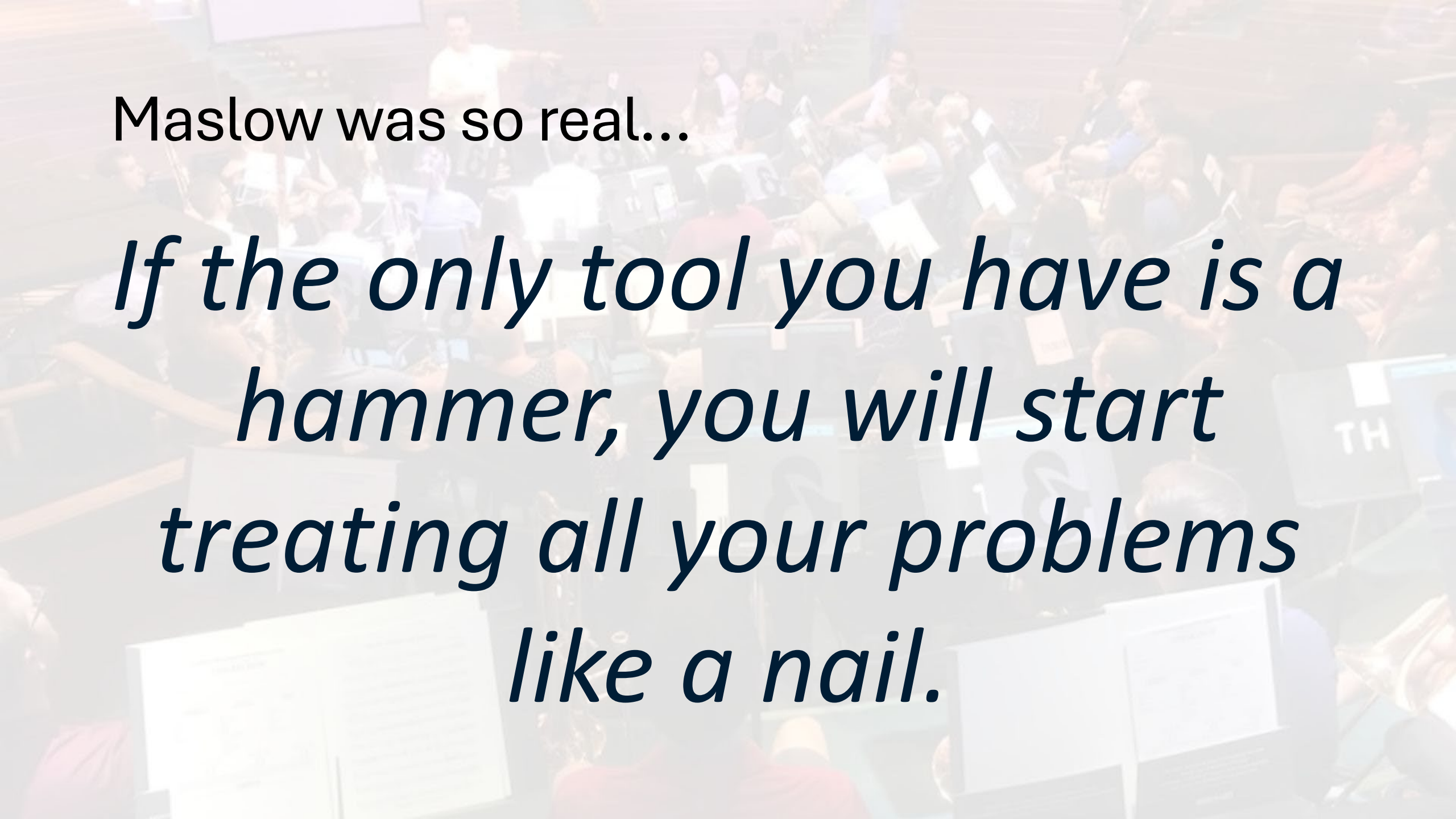
There are no professional emergencies.

Whatever it is, it can wait.

Engagement goes both ways. Model what you expect.

Be Present!

- Nothing is more important than what is going on in the classroom.
 - (Fundamental time should not be a formality.)
- Model what you expect.
 - Do you check your phone during rehearsal?
 - Do you show up to rehearsal prepared?
- Do you have a plan?
- If you want them to be on time, then you need to start on time.



Maslow was so real...

*If the only tool you have is a
hammer, you will start
treating all your problems
like a nail.*

Redirect and Reinforce

We foster expectations through positive reinforcement.

Redirect undesirable behaviors and reinforce when correct.

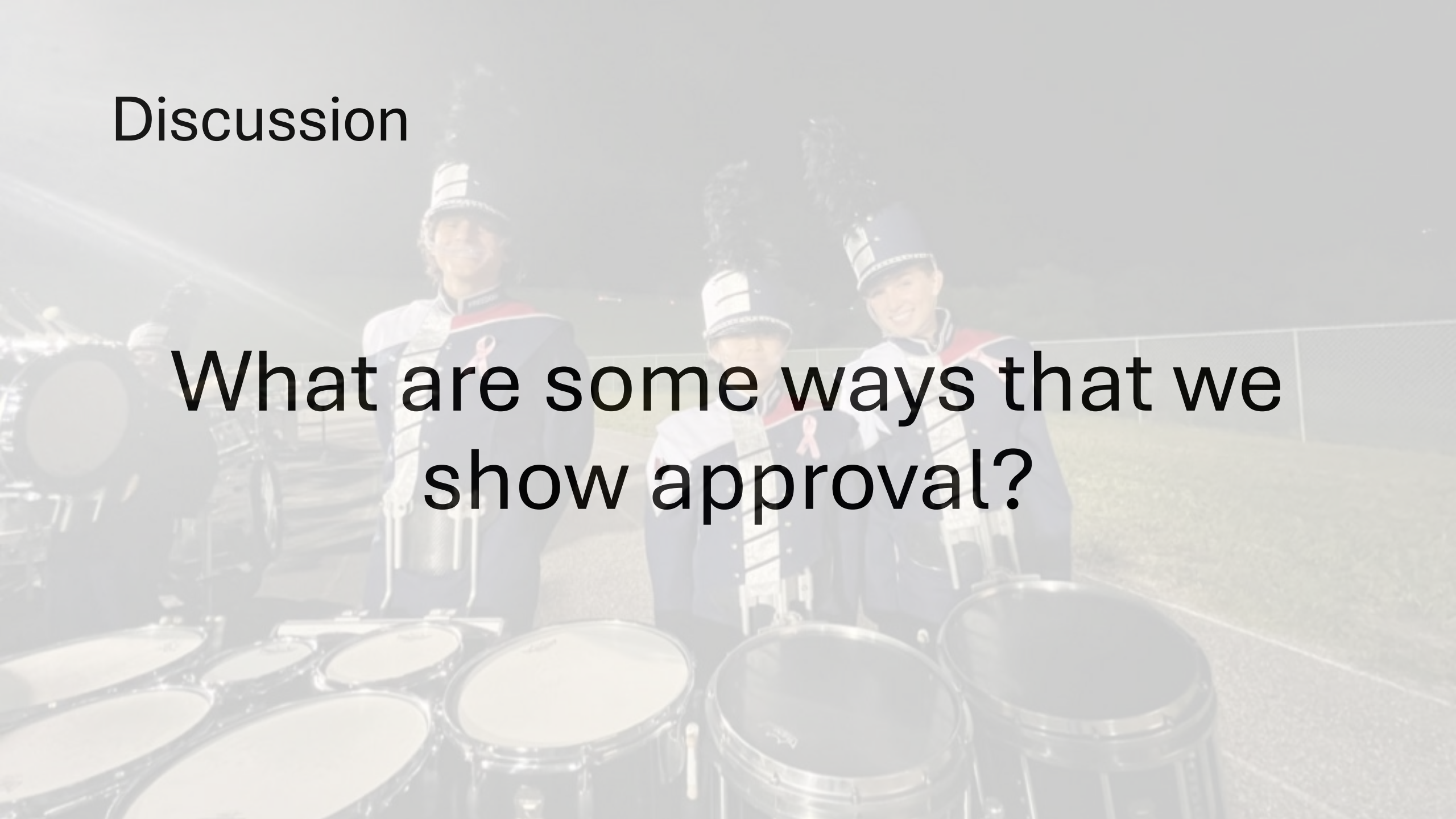
Non-verbal is powerful.

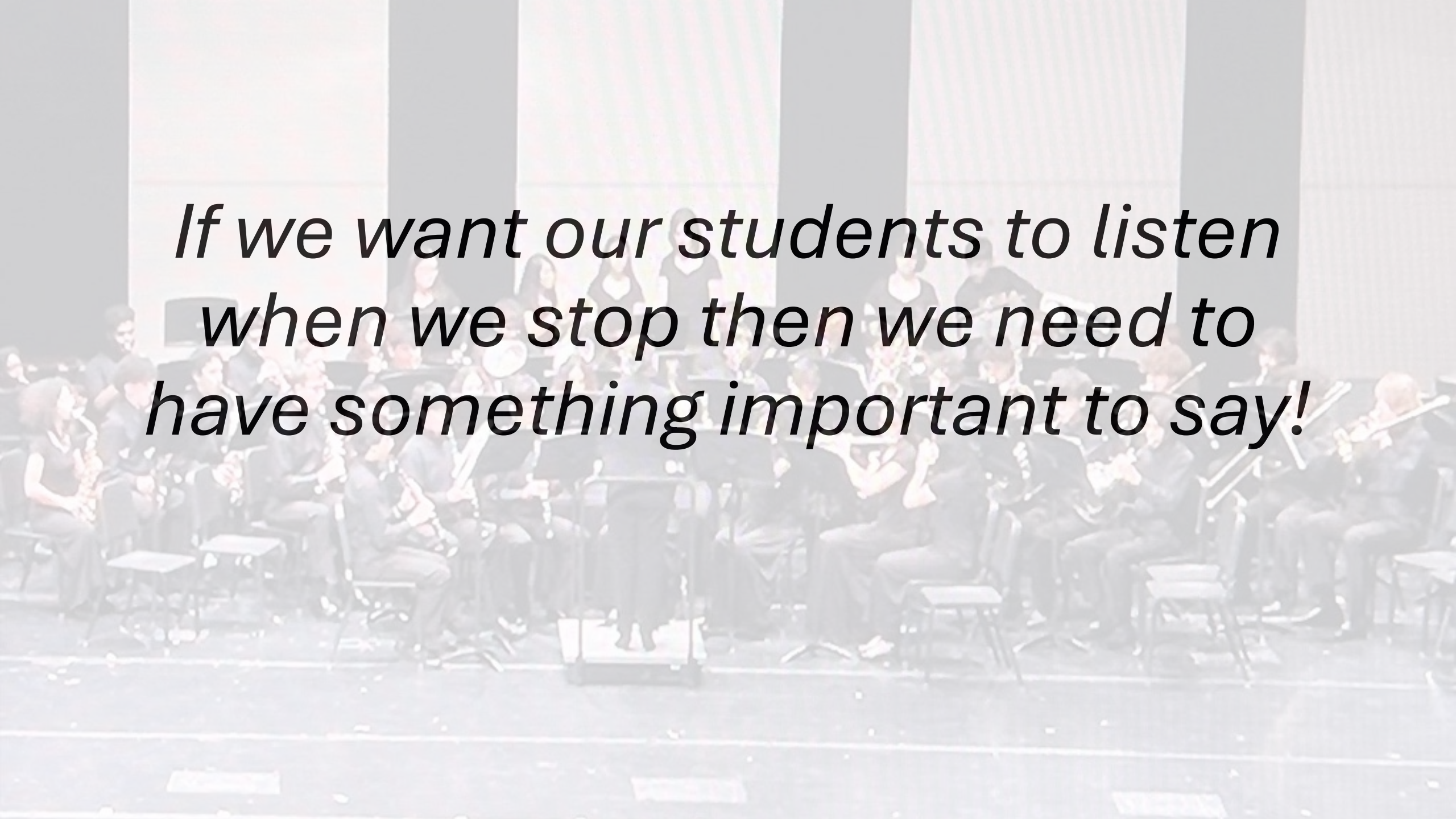
- Proximity to redirect
- Smile to reinforce
- Look in their direction!

Hands Up!

Discussion

What are some ways that we show approval?



A faded background image of a school orchestra performing on a stage. The students are seated in rows, playing various instruments including saxophones, brass instruments, and woodwinds. A conductor is visible in the center, facing the ensemble. The stage is lit, and the background consists of large windows or a stage backdrop.

*If we want our students to listen
when we stop then we need to
have something important to say!*

Feedback

Do you want your students to listen?

- Say important things.

Specific/Positive

Do they talk when you stop playing?

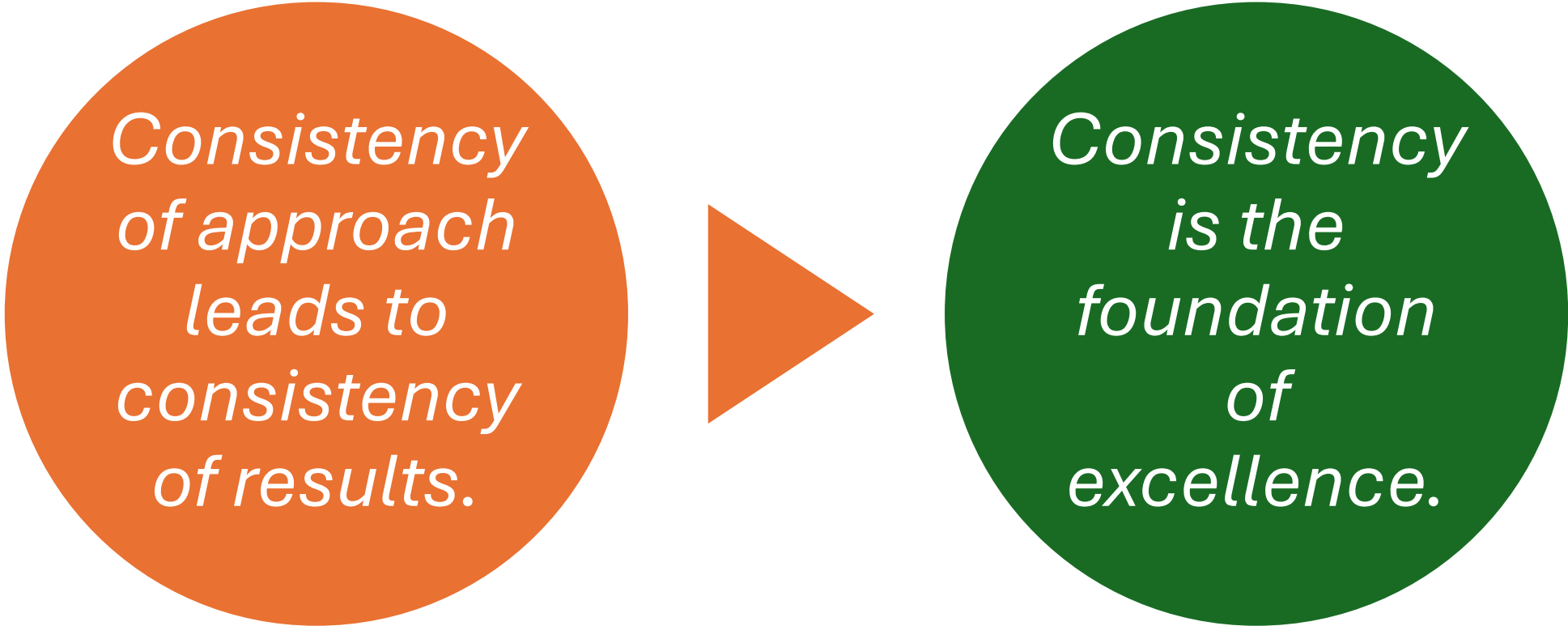
What if you don't know to say?

- It can difficult at first to hear things, interpret, and provide feedback.
- Turn it on them (ask them a question).
 - What can we do to make a better sound?
- Observing Solo and Ensemble MPA is a good opportunity to learn feedback techniques.

Build Connections

- Greet your students at the door.
 - Talk to them!
- Use humor
 - (appropriate humor)
 - Sarcasm can be isolating.
- Be their cheerleader.
 - Brag on them to their families.
- Attend events to support them.
- Tell them your glad they are there.





*Consistency
of approach
leads to
consistency
of results.*

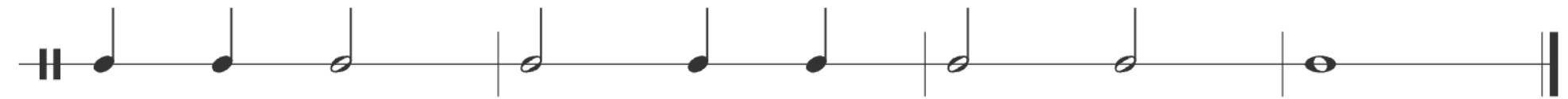


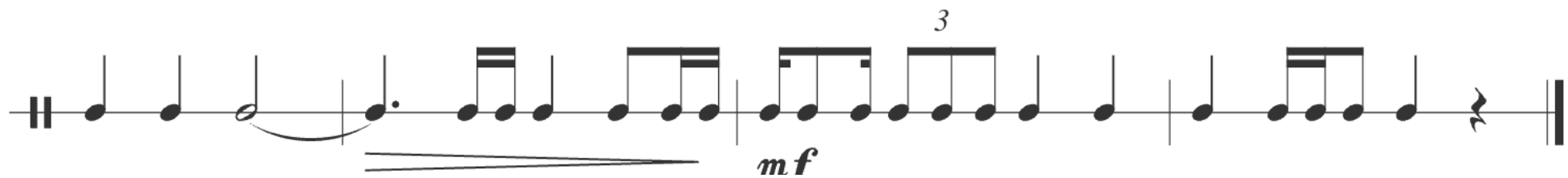
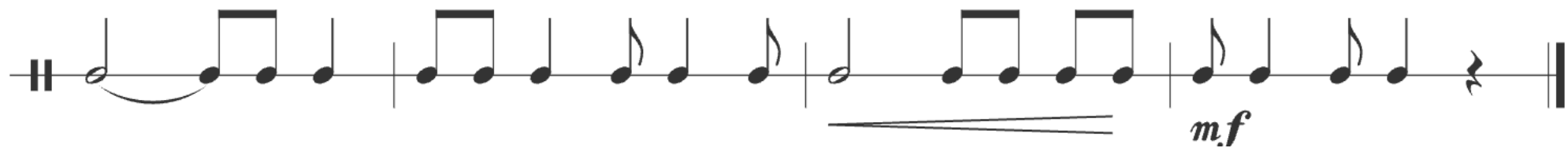
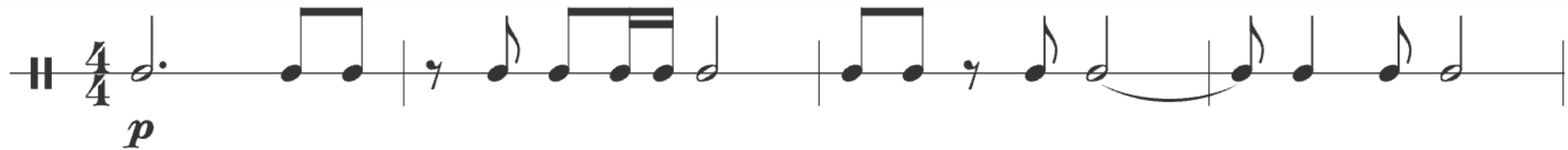
*Consistency
is the
foundation
of
excellence.*

Be Consistent

- Clear, consistent routines and procedures provide safety and stability.
 - Do they know what to expect when they enter the room.
 - You can keep consistent routines *while* altering content, difficulty, and complexity.
- “SAY LESS”
 - When you don’t have to explain what you are doing each day, a higher percentage of your words are devoted to important information.
 - When you talk, they will listen.
- Be consistent with your expectations.

Say less.





Trust

1

Be trustworthy

- Be honest with your students, it gives you credibility.
- Don't patronize, answer, "now what."

2

Trust them!

- Kids know if you don't trust them.

3

Trust them enough to challenge them.

- They can perform more challenging music.
- They can do it a higher level.

*Good fortune is what happens
when opportunity meets with
planning.*

Thomas Edison



Be Prepared

- Planning is an investment in success.
 - When you “wing it,” your kids don’t have your full attention.
- Set specific goals for each class, and stick to your plan.
 - Avoid “goal creep.”
 - How will you accomplish this.
- Score study.
 - This can be time consuming but doesn’t have to be. It also looks different for everyone.
 - Focus on your plan for that rehearsal. Know the parts.
- Plan for detours.
- 10 minutes of planning could prevent 45 minutes of frustration.

Be positive

- Positivity inspires.
- Negativity is contagious.
- The power of “get” and “yet.”
 - You don’t know your part. OR
 - You don’t know your part, yet.
 - We have to go play at the pep rally. OR
 - We get to go play at the pep rally.
- If you want kids to stay engaged, make sure they feel glad to be there!

Closing Thoughts

It is impossible to cover everything...

If you want them to value music, then focus on music.

SAY LESS!

Actions speak louder than words.

If you want them to be on time, start on time.

Contact

Michael Antmann
Freedom High School
Orange County Public Schools
michaelantmann@mac.com