

Blue Collar Band:

Excellence in Suburban Title I Schools

Featuring the Zion-Benton High School Symphonic Band

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This clinic highlights strategies that build thriving music programs in Title I schools where barriers are real but community and creativity drive success.

Build Systems that Outlast You

Vertical alignment: consistent methods from 5th–12th grade
Invest in curriculum (Essential Elements, Rhythm Bee, Habits) and consistency

Know Your Context

Understand Title I funding and local challenges (attendance, transience, limited transportation)
Use district data to justify support and resource requests

Maximize What You Have

Grants, surplus programs, and community donations
Recruitment & Retention Tactics:
Joint middle school rehearsals & kick-off nights
Step-Up Night for families and music vendors
Celebrate every level of success — not just competition results

Instructional Strategies:

Tone + Blend = Intonation; teach through trios and singing
Literacy before speed: build confidence in notation fluency
Use data from tuners/metronomes to measure growth, not just grading

Funding & Advocacy Tips:

Align purchases with Title IV or tech grants
Keep a "messy office story" to show visible need to administrators
Share success with community partners and district leaders

Contact & Quote:

Quote: "There's always money in the banana stand."
Quality equipment setups (remove variables to focus on sound)
Creative scheduling, shared rehearsals, and student ownership

General Rehearsal Technique Ideas

Teach using the four "In's": In-Tone, In-Time, In-Tune, In-Touch
Reverse the tuning order by warming up, playing literature, then targeting specific issues through drills
Alternate tempos to clarify articulation and control
Count down during long rests to maintain focus
Emphasize the middle and end of notes for consistent tone and unified releases
Have students sing or hear the V before entering on the I
Rotate section-led "potluck" rehearsals to build leadership and accountability
Use silent leadership exercises where section leaders guide nonverbally
End rehearsals with a warmup that reinforces material from the music
Rehearse tone and blend in trios for stronger intonation
Demonstrate articulation using "air violin" motions to model stroke style
Encourage stronger players to step back and balance with weaker parts
Address both harmonic and melodic intonation in daily tuning
Start each day with F Remingtons, slurs, and chorales focused on tone
Teach technique every day with consistency and intention
Organize binders with warmups, reference pages, and ensemble music for efficiency
Incorporate tuners and metronomes for feedback rather than grading
Ask students "When can I hear your part?" to shift responsibility and promote preparation
Select literature that can be performance-ready within six weeks
Plan rehearsals with built-in buffer time to manage stress and pacing
Shape crescendos and diminuendos with clear intent rather than equal energy
Close rehearsals with reflection on successes and next steps
Maintain instruments to reduce distractions and improve sound quality
Invite alumni or older students to assist with sectionals or clinics when staffing is limited