
The Rural and Urban School

— *Venn Diagram* —

The Rural and Urban School Venn Diagram

The Midwest Clinic 2021

Presenters :

Amy Heavilin & Aaron Burkhart

Indian Creek High School

Pike High School

What We Believe

(And you should, too)



What We Believe

(And you should, too)

**All students, regardless
of background or
zip code, deserve the
highest quality
music education.**

Disclaimer!

AUDIENCE COLLABORATION

Turn to your neighbor(s)!

What are the stereotypical things you think of when you think of:

Urban, Rural, Suburban, Private,
and Charter School Band Programs?

You DO NOT have to agree with the stereotype.

30 Seconds!

Disclaimer : We Don't Have all the Answers

"Her school isn't rural enough."

"His school isn't urban enough."

"My school has bigger challenges."

"The suburbs have problems and
great things, too!"

"There's no way I can do any of this
at my school."

"Covid has decimated my program.
Can this help?"

Disclaimer : We Don't Have all the Answers

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"My school has bigger challenges."

"The suburbs have problems and great things, too!"

"There's no way I can do any of this at my school."

That's Okay!

This can all be true, but we have some good ideas for you to steal, regardless of situation!

Or maybe you'll gain a better understanding of other programs.

That's cool, too!

Allow us to introduce ourselves.....

Amy Heavilin

- I am in my 22nd year of teaching.
- I teach High School Band, Beginning Band, AP Music Theory, and Special Education Music at Indian Creek High School (plus some clubs).
- My Undergraduate Degree is in Music Education from the University of Akron (Ohio).
- My Masters Degree is in Wind Conducting from Butler University.
- I taught for 3 years in New Philadelphia, Ohio - band and choir.
- I was the assistant band director at Westfield High School for 4 years.
- I am in year 15 at Indian Creek. Here's how I got here!

Aaron Burkhart

- I am in my 14th year of teaching.
- I teach or co-teach four levels of concert band, marching band, jazz band, AP Music Theory, and serve as Co-Department Chair of Performing Arts at Pike High School
- My undergraduate degree is in Music Education from Indiana University
- My Masters Degree is in Wind Conducting from IU
- I taught for 4 years at Eastern Greene Schools-- band, general music
- This is my 10th year in MSD Pike Township-- started at Lincoln Middle School and moved to high school. Here's how I got here!

**This is a pretty Rural thing to say, but
it's true for EVERYONE in this room,
regardless of where you teach :**

We are farmers.

We plant seeds.

They need time to grow.

AUDIENCE COLLABORATION

Turn to your neighbor(s)!

What challenges do you think students face when there is a high turnover of directors?

30 Seconds!

Give your school and your students your time.

We want to challenge the common thinking that Urban and Rural schools are just quick stops on the way to “a good job.”

If you provide a quality music education for ALL students, your program will thrive despite the obstacles.

You will thrive.

It can be the dream job, because YOU created it.

But being at a place for 2 years is not going to affect long term change

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It can be the dream job, because YOU created it.

Your students deserve you.

AUDIENCE COLLABORATION

Turn to your neighbor(s)!

What do students
need from you?

30 Seconds!

What do your students need from you?

- Authenticity
- Compassion
- Advanced Musicianship
- Trust
- Meet them where they are
- Be flexible
- Encourage leadership
- Find their strengths
- Challenge them
- Choose good literature
- Fight for them
- Set Goals
- Organize EVERYONE AND
——EVERYTHING

Curricular Issues

— *In Urban and Rural Programs* —

Curricular Issues

Here's how we're different!

- RURAL : often there are fewer students, so you get to know them better.
- RURAL : Individual Attention is often easier.
- RURAL : It's all you. Mold the program how you want!
- RURAL : More opportunities to collaborate with non-music teachers.
- RURAL : Less Students = Less Instrumentation
- RURAL : Facility Challenges

Curricular Issues

Here's how we're different!

- URBAN : Large school in large area that lacks community identity (16 public high schools in Indianapolis)
 - URBAN : Your job is a very small cog in a very large machine
 - URBAN : Less opportunity to interact with K-8 students-- different feeders
 - URBAN : Lots of students-- majority cannot afford instrument
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Curricular Issues

Here's how we're alike!

- Our students are amazing and want challenges and SUCCESS (not exclusive to Rural & Urban).
 - High Turnover in teachers means (often) a fascinating Music Library.
 - At first, high turnover means inconsistent skills in your students.
 - Students will grow with Quality Literature. Start here. ALWAYS.
 - Chamber Music and Etude (All-State) issues.
-

Here are the key Curricular Takeaways & Tools

- Start with the Literature. Always.
- Establish stable - but rotating - fundamental routines
- Be creative - think outside the box
- Understand your instrumentation and program based on your STRENGTHS (Think less about weaknesses)
- Seek out guest instructors-- doesn't have to be the professor from the big school
- Don't throw out your Covid Strategies! (Zoom, Flex Arrangements, etc.)
- Give your podium away as much as possible
- Utilize Technology to supplement your teaching (virtual guest artists, YouTube, etc)

Perception Issues

— *In Urban and Rural Programs* —

Perception Issues

Here's how we're different!

- RURAL : Students in the country (or their parents) aren't interested in the Fine Arts or Culture.
 - RURAL : Programs are too small to be of good quality.
 - RURAL : Being asked constantly when you'll move to a "better school."
 - RURAL : Student belief that college bands are for "kids from big ("good") programs."
-

Perception Issues

Here's how we're different!

- URBAN: Cultural assumptions (IMPLICIT BIASES)
 - URBAN: Many “urban” schools were, at one point, not urban - past community has ideas of what program should be
 - URBAN: Students only like “fun” music. They don't like art music
-

Perception Issues

Here's how we're alike!

- No one knows why we do what we do outside of our area.
 - Pulling out students from class is a non-starter. Too many academic standing pressures.
 - We can, at times, surprise people-- "Oh wow, they are really good for a..."
 - Students don't act or perform well because "they don't care."
-

Here are the key Perception Takeaways & Tools

- Meet regularly with your administration
- Invite Administration and Community members to concerts
- ALWAYS be flexible when a teacher asks for a favor
- Be creative
- Advocate for yourself and your program and your kids. ALWAYS.
- FIND YOUR NICHE.
- Champion your program's niche (if your concert band is fantastic, let them know. If pep band is super fun and big, be proud of that)
- Be collaborative
- Work on your analogies
- Find every opportunity to let your kids know they are worthy
- Reach out to newspapers / social media

Financial & Support Issues

— *In Urban and Rural Programs* —

Financial and Support Issues

Here's how we're different!

- RURAL : with a smaller program, expectations and pressure can be lower.
 - RURAL : Smaller school means fewer people to coordinate with for projects (which is great!).
 - RURAL : Teacher Pay often lower.
 - RURAL : Band kids do EVERYTHING, and might be tapped out for fees, supplies, etc.
 - RURAL : Everyone is pulling from the same pots to raise money, and sponsorships are infuriatingly hard to come by.
 - RURAL : One breakdown and you're at square one for years. (Many programs dealing with this with Covid).
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Financial and Support Issues

Here's how we're different!

- URBAN : Most students need instruments
 - URBAN: Fundraising opportunities limited by students' socioeconomic status (low income apartments not conducive to selling chocolate)
 - URBAN: State budgets syphon funds to go to charters and vouchers as well tax caps (Pike loses 3.5 million in general budget per year to these budget adjustments)
 - URBAN : Larger school means more opportunities for help within administration-- just hard to find
 - URBAN : Larger network, but many guests, clinicians, mentors paid better by surrounding suburbs
 - URBAN : Most funds come from district-- Boosters not as well funded--less parents available
-

Financial and Support Issues

Here's how we're alike!

- Low Budgets from School to take care of essentials and repairs
- Not Enough Equipment
- Little to no money for staffing or guest clinicians
- Student fees must stay low so as not to price out students
- Choices must be made in best interest of student music education (show design budget vs. musical knowledge)
- Have to find creative ways to staff pageantry groups.
- Initially, support from community and admin might be low because “you won’t be here very long.”
- Connections with Businesses is harder work.

Here are the key Support Takeaways & Tools

- Meet regularly with your administration.
- Be creative - look for solutions that don't cost money.
- Learn to cook well. And then, bribe (or just bribe, no cooking).
- Use your unique talents and gifts to your advantage
- Advocate for yourself and your program and your kids. ALWAYS.
- When you ask for money, explain how this helps kids (and how you can help fundraise, too).
- Team up with other groups to raise funds.
- Meet regularly with your administration, and INVITE THEM to concerts!
- ALWAYS be flexible when a teacher asks for a favor
- Never go to someone with a problem without a few solutions
- Meet EVERY new administrator
- Use technology to expand the area of your community.
- Utilize alumni!
- Parental involvement - quality, not quantity.
- Be kind. Always.

What's in Our Coping Toolbox?

Things to say over and over in year one....

**This is not the
students' fault**

Things to say over and over in year one....

**This is not the
students' fault**

**This is not the
previous
teacher's fault**

**This is not the
previous teacher's
fault, or the
student's fault.**

**How to
Cope!**

- Take a deep breath
- "Cool. Let's try something different."
- Solve the problem
- "It's always okay to try new things."
- Don't give up on an idea with first failure.
- Trust your talent
- Ask a trusted student or parent
- Meet them where they are
- Keep it simple
- Write it down - it'll be
hilarious later.

It's a Marathon.

It's a Marathon.

Not a Sprint.

Here's Why I'm Happy at a Rural School

*(But, you have to find YOUR
Happy.)*

- The students and community are invested in our success.
- Work - Life Balance is amazing
- I have an incredibly fulfilling hobby that I get to do outside of my career
- Now, I get to conduct (almost) anything I want - it is professionally fulfilling to me, and the students are exposed to a TON of good literature.
- After building up respect, we get more "yes."
- The students can hear our progress.
- My schedule is diverse,
- It's just fun. And when it isn't, I have a great network.

Here's Why I'm Happy at an Urban School

*(But, you have to find YOUR
Happy.)*

- My students are EXCITED for opportunities
 - They LOVE music in all its forms
 - Extremely fulfilling to lead students to success
 - Support to take program whichever direction we need to go
 - Students at all levels means being able to program at all levels and styles
 - My long-time interest in wide varieties of music helps me relate to my students
 - Deeply invested in the community
-

Insurmountable Obstacles

— *In Urban and Rural Programs* —

Insurmountable Obstacles

- Will never have large six figure BOA budget (And THAT'S OKAY!)
- Student fees cannot increase
- Constant Changing of State Level non-music requirements

Insurmountable Obstacles

Honestly?

There aren't many, if you use a lot of

creativity

and

focused realism.

- Will never have large six figure BOA budget (And THAT'S OKAY!)
- Student fees cannot increase
- Constant Changing of State Level non-music requirements

Facing Obstacles

- Be patient
- Keep goals realistic
- Find someone who writes grants
- Reach out to friends and family with talents
- Partner up with other school groups
- Ask for help
- Don't try to re-create your high school experience
- Figure out who can solve the problem
- Provide experiences for ALL kids
- Be honest with yourself
- Today, This Month, This Year, Someday

It's okay to :

Say No

- and -

To Let It Go

Questions or Feedback????

We'd Love Both!

Contact us ANYTIME if you need anything!

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