

A Breath of Fresh Air for Bands in a Small, Rural Community

Presented by:
John Mireles & John Carroll

You got the job! – First Things First

1. Logistics
 - a. What's been set in motion?
 - i. Marching music, drill, guard uniforms, props, choreography, etc.
 - b. Inventory (or not...)
 - c. Student Roster
 - i. Contact students as soon as possible.
 - ii. Use all forms of communication: phone, school messaging app, email, social media, newspaper.
 - d. Band Calendar
 - i. Find the conflicts NOW. Don't give them the opportunity to say, 'I didn't know...'
 1. Sports, academic, testing dates, school holidays.
 - e. Band Handbook
 - i. Be thorough. It's best to have too much information.
 - ii. Include: philosophy, expectations, eligibility, attendance, discipline, grading policy, etc.
 - iii. Parent and student acknowledgement of receipt.
 - f. Meetings
 - i. Student leaders, full band, parents, boosters
 - ii. Not necessarily at the same time
 - g. What else needs to be done?
2. Administration – Many of these people are homegrown!
 - a. Superintendent, Principal, Assistant Principal
 - i. What are their impressions of the program? Good and bad.
 - ii. What are their expectations?
 - b. School Counselor
 - i. You need this one on your side!
 - ii. Scheduling
 - iii. Calendar conflicts can be resolved if found quickly.

- c. Front Office Secretaries
- d. Transportation – You WILL forget to request transportation.
- e. Maintenance – You WILL break something.

Culture

- 1. Values
 - a. What's important to the kids and their program?
 - i. Self-perception is everything.
 - b. Traditions – To keep or not to keep
 - i. Don't change everything at once.
 - ii. Adapt and slowly change it.
- 2. Identity
 - a. Who do the students see themselves as?
 - i. Band in Brady was not the “cool” thing to do.
 - 1. Is this isolated to band or a larger issue on campus?
 - 2. Changing mentalities.
- 3. Their ‘Why’
 - a. The definition of “fun”
 - i. There are two types:
 - 1. Fun they forget by tomorrow.
 - 2. Fun they will remember for the rest of their lives.
- 4. Cultural Roadblocks
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Attitudes
 - c. Parent Involvement
 - d. Administration
- 5. What's the fix?
 - a. Trophies matter. Kids remember success and positive affirmation.
 - b. Fun, enjoyable music of high quality. It does not have to be difficult.
 - c. Success at all costs.
 - i. What is the band's definition of success?
 - 1. Success at contests
 - 2. Positive Ratings
 - 3. Friendships/Social
 - 4. Respect from student body
 - 5. Community support during performances
 - 6. Administrative/Faculty support of the band

The Band and Band Director's Role Within the Community

1. Public Perception

- a. Do the parades, Christmas carols on the courthouse lawn, play taps, Veteran's Day Concert, etc.
- b. The band director must establish himself/herself as a supporter of the district, not only for their program.
- c. Many communities equate a good band with numbers and not quality.
- d. What is the community's expectation of the ensemble?
 - i. Remember, it's a small town, and people will talk.

Musical Excellence

1. Fundamentals – Students did not join band for the Remington's and slurs.
 - a. Tone quality, technique, range
 - i. You will have to be creative. Wrap the pill in cheese.
2. Meet them at their current level, not where you want them.
 - a. "Critical observation with positive, encouraging comments and a calm insistence to do the right thing." – Dena Laurel
3. Fix the problem at the source.
 - a. Beginning band is your opportunity to solidify high-quality musical traits that will stay with the student throughout their time in band.
 - i. You should be excited to move these students through the program.
 - b. 7th and 8th grade students are malleable. Again, wrap the pill in cheese.
 - i. You can change their perception of band.
 - c. Set yourself up for success. There is no substitute for beautiful, in-tune sounds.
 - d. Start with the end in mind.
 - e. Create an irresistible experience.

Self-Care – "Stop and smell the roses." Dan Gibbs

1. You can't get it done all at once.
 - a. Have realistic expectations.
2. Find a mentor.
3. Have social outlets...yes, you can find them in small towns!