

**THE NEXT STEP:
A YOUNG TEACHER'S GUIDE TO MAKING CHOICES THAT
POSITIVELY AFFECT YOUR LIFE AND CAREER**

PRESENTED TO THE

61st Midwest Clinic: An International Band & Orchestra Conference – *Mentoring in Music Education*
Chicago Hilton & Towers – Chicago, Illinois – Thursday, December 20, 2007 – 8:30 to 9:30 AM

CLINIC OBJECTIVES:

This clinic endeavors to provide an in-depth look at two popular and viable paths for young music educators and music education students to pursue. Specifically, the clinic will highlight some of the advantages and ramifications of both beginning one's teaching career straight out of undergraduate school, versus immediately enrolling in a graduate program upon the completion of an undergraduate degree. The clinic's intention is simply to inform, not persuade clinic attendees to choose one path or the other or imply that one choice is more beneficial.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

THE EFFECTS ON PEDAGOGICAL AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT:

- How does each path broaden my base of knowledge?
- What do I ultimately see myself doing professionally?
- Is it possible to really know what I will ultimately do at the age of 22 (or younger)?
- If I choose to immediately enroll in graduate school, what kind of school fits someone of my experience and age? What will my responsibilities be? Do I want to be involved heavily with more ensemble- or research-oriented endeavors? What matters more to me: where I attend graduate school or with whom I study?
- Who are your professional mentors? Which path did they follow, and why? Given the opportunity, would they pursue this path again?
- If considering immediate enrollment in graduate school, what sub-discipline are you considering? (e.g., instrumental performance, conducting, music education, music therapy, musicology, etc.)

THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EFFECTS:

- Do I find many hours of dedicated study in a specific discipline tedious, or exciting? Do I think this could be exciting, but right now I feel academic "burn out" setting in?
- Do I find the idea of 70 sets of young eyes and ears waiting for my leadership terrifying, or intriguing? Am I considering extending my academic career *because* I am terrified of managing a large classroom?
- What, if any, are the social implications of immediately beginning graduate school, especially as a teaching assistant? Can I earn the respect of undergraduate students that are basically my age, but not feel compelled to become one of them?
- Is it an option to pursue graduate school part-time while teaching in the public or private schools? Can I pursue my graduate studies during the summers? Is it feasible for me to complete graduate work while teaching during the school year?

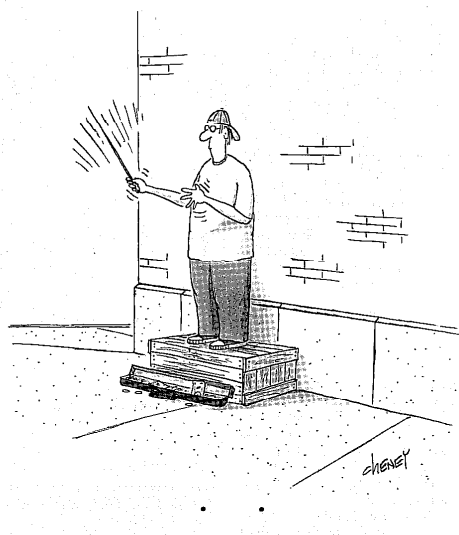
ACKNOWLEDGING THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF EACH CHOICE:

- One will make much more money teaching than in graduate school, but in the long term, which will yield the most?
- How much do school districts in your desired area of residence pay in addition to the regular salary schedule/pay-scales for graduate degrees? Will the school district in question pay part or all of the tuition for my graduate studies?
- How much would you make by way of a stipend for being a teaching assistant at your desired institution? How much, if any, would you have to pay in tuition at this institution? Would you have to take out student loans to complete the degree and be able to survive day-to-day?
- Would you be able to attend graduate school and still attend your state's annual music conventions and/or the Midwest Clinic (or MENC, CBDNA, etc.)? How important to you is attending conventions to further your professional development?
- Are you comfortable not paying into your state's teacher retirement program for two years? Which would be the larger amount; the two years of teacher retirement you would lose, or the amount you would gain in stipends from school districts for the duration of your teaching career?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Finally, we wanted to provide some experience-based questions and ideas on the things we thought about when making the choice to attend graduate school or teach in the public schools upon graduation. Included in this list are some of the ideas and advice we've received in the past that have guided us through our young careers. Please take and glean what you will from this list so **THE NEXT STEP** you make in life will be in the right direction. Best wishes to all students, directors and clinic attendees for successful students and positive music making!

- Ideally, the clinic should be subtitled, "The Best Fit For You." Make sure any and all decisions regarding your professional life are in your (and your family's) best interests.
- Can I still improve upon all aspects of my musicianship with either choice? Will there be a chance for me to improve my TEACHING, PERFORMANCE and PEDAGOGICAL knowledge while pursuing each avenue?
- What are my 5-, 10-, 20-year goals professionally? Personally? Financially?
- Which factor is more important to me when choosing graduate schools: where the school is located or with whom I study?
- Always be genuine – how you are as a person is always reflected in your music making! Remember that your mentor teachers want your teaching to be a great combination of your personality and mannerisms plus the many teaching techniques they have empowered you with. Be yourself on *and* off the podium!
- Teaching experience in any setting (i.e., public school, private lesson teaching, etc.) is a very valuable resource from which to draw upon. If you have the opportunity to teach, jump at the chance!
- If getting certified to teach, student teaching should mirror the teaching you will do in the public schools.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- First and foremost, we are very grateful to the participating directors for their survey contributions associated with the clinic. We believe that these individuals represent the best in music education—Thank you!
- Thanks to Dr. David Campo, Mr. Fred Allen, Dr. Gary Wurtz, Dr. Deb Scott and Dr. Tim King for their input regarding content and help in proofing the final clinic handout.
- Thanks to the faculty and students at Texas A&M University-Commerce (Spring 2006) and Stephen F. Austin State University (Fall 2007) who graciously allowed us the time and use of their facilities to present this clinic for them.
- Thank you to the Board of Directors and Staff of the Midwest Clinic. We appreciate your leadership in making this conference available every year!
- Thanks to Mr. Will Skelton, *Director of Bands*, Lakeview Middle School (The Colony, Texas) for presenting with us at the 2006 TMEA Convention. Your contributions and input over the past two years have made this presentation possible!
- Lastly, thank you to those who attended this clinic. Your presence and interest in being better teachers and musicians is appreciated. We hope you can take some ideas from our presentation and allow them to affect your lives in a positive way. Have a great rest of your time here in Chicago!

SURVEY OF MUSIC EDUCATORS

As part of this presentation, we thought it would be beneficial for the clinic attendees to read the thoughts of music educators who have many, many years of combined teaching experience in college programs and public schools. Below we have listed the questions asked, the directors who responded and the responses from the survey. We are extremely grateful for their time and participation. We also hope that their words of wisdom can be a catalyst in helping others make great professional and personal decisions.

PARTICIPATING MUSIC EDUCATORS

- Fred J. Allen, *Director of Bands*, Stephen F. Austin State University – Nacogdoches, TX
- Caroline Beatty, *Interim Associate Director of Bands*, Texas State University – San Marcos, TX
- Brian Britt, *Associate Director of Bands, Assistant Director of the School of Music and Director, The “Pride of Oklahoma” Marching Band*, University of Oklahoma – Norman, OK
- Dr. David Campo, *Associate Director of Bands and Director, Lumberjack Marching Band*, Stephen F. Austin State University – Nacogdoches, TX
- Paula A. Crider, *Professor Emeritus*, University of Texas at Austin – Austin, TX
- Don Hanna, *Past-President, Texas Music Educators Association* and Instrumental Music Specialist/Teacher Mentor, Ft. Worth I.S.D. – Ft. Worth, TX
- Dr. Brad Kent, *Director of Bands*, Lamar University - Beaumont, TX
- John L. Whitwell, *Director of Bands Emeritus*, Michigan State University – East Lansing, MI

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Did you begin teaching public school upon graduation from undergraduate school, or did you immediately enroll in graduate school?

“I did both. I began my M.M. percussion degree and was a .25 [graduate assistant with] the drum line. I also was a .50 assistant band director and percussion specialist in the public school system in Norman. After a year I realized I wanted to teach full time and felt that I would get more out of my M.M. experience if I taught for awhile.” – *B. Britt*

“I planned to go straight to graduate school after completion of undergraduate study, but while student teaching, the band director suffered a heart attack, and I suddenly found myself as an ‘instant band director!’ This was not what I had planned, but in retrospect, it was the best thing that could have happened. I taught grades 6-12 in a small Mississippi school for two years before moving to Texas to attend graduate school. In that time, I became aware of what I needed to learn to become a more effective teacher and a more knowledgeable musician.” – *P. Crider*

“I began teaching directly out of undergraduate school. (5 years public school teaching, 2 years master’s degree, 8 years public school teaching, 2 years doctoral school, now in higher education.” – *C. Beatty*

“I taught in the public schools immediately after graduating from undergraduate school.” – *J. Whitwell*

“Began after undergraduate.” – *D. Hanna*

“I went to teach immediately, though I did enroll in summer grad[uate] school the summer after my first year of teaching, and continued that for three summers.” – *F. Allen*

“I taught seven years of public school before beginning graduate school.” – *B. Kent*

“I did both. I enrolled in graduate school and took a middle school teaching job at the same time.” – *D. Campo*

Why did you choose to follow this particular path, and would you follow this path again if given the opportunity?

“At first I really wanted to focus on percussion and the opportunity to teach a collegiate level drum line appealed to me. Also, the .50 position in the public schools came open following my student teaching semester so that was another opportunity to teach and learn so I jumped at it.” – *B. Britt*

“I wanted to teach. I got the degree and went to teach. At that time I had no thoughts of graduate school. I would with no question do it again this way.” – *C. Beatty*

“I never really considering going to graduate school straight out of undergraduate studies because I was already married and seriously needed to get started teaching as soon as possible. For me, aside from the financial reasons, I believe it was best to teach a few years before starting the Master's degree. I knew I NEEDED to go back to school because there were so many things I needed to learn about teaching. Teaching a few years gave me a ‘need to know,’ which I believe is the best possible foundation for learning.” – *J. Whitwell*

“I was anxious to begin teaching. I would follow the same path if given the opportunity.” – *D. Hanna*

“My main reason was financial. My parents were broke and I had no funds of my own, so I needed a job. I don't know what I would do if I could choose to start over at that point, because I think my path would have been drastically different.” – *F. Allen*

“I chose to begin teaching at the time because I followed the advice of my mentors in telling me that graduate school would be much more meaningful after having public school teaching experience. In addition, I really wanted to begin my teaching career and knew that school was only going to prepare me to a point—the rest was going to be learned by getting a teaching job and actually doing it. Then I would find out how much I really didn't know and would be extremely focused on what my goals should be in graduate school.” -- *B. Kent*

“The reason I did both was financial. The State of Louisiana paid for my graduate degree as long as I was teaching in the public schools. This program allowed me to do my graduate work and earn a paycheck simultaneously. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but if I had it to do over again, I would probably not do it the same way. I think my graduate work was diluted by the fact that I taught full time. I had to take courses when they were available and I couldn't take a full load. Consequently, it took me a really long time to get my master's degree.” – *D. Campo*



What are some of the factors you consider when advising a young music educator about the best route for them to follow?

“I think that for the vast majority of students, getting out and ‘testing the waters’ as a teacher is such an important process to go through. Doing so also crystallizes the ‘need to know’ additional information and sets the stage for a much deeper graduate level learning experience.” – *B. Brill*

“Musical maturity, academic discipline and success. Passion.” – *P. Crider*

“I try to never tell someone what I think they should do with their life, but I do give them advice on this topic. It is my belief that graduate school for music educators/conductors is much richer with ‘real world’ experience behind it. Putting to work the things introduced in the undergraduate classroom will help people determine what it is they need and want to know more about. Then they can make the decision as to what they want to spend their time studying in graduate school. Even if someone *knows* coming out of undergraduate school that they want to study, say, conducting or music education getting out there and getting teaching/conducting experience on their own is truly valuable and offers a different perspective on school. In the mean time, they can participate in conducting workshops or study privately with someone. (If someone knows that they want to try to play their instrument professionally, sometimes immediate graduate school is the way to go. This can work if the ability level is professional enough because they have been performing for so long already. If you are a teacher/conductor, you are just starting!) In other words, in my humble opinion, I think that, depending on the student and the educational situation, an immediate Master’s degree has the potential to end up being simply an extension of the Bachelor’s degree when it should be a significant advancement of knowledge and ability.” – *C. Beatty*

“One factor is the student's MEDIUM and LONG RANGE CAREER GOALS. If a student aspires to be a performance major leading to a major orchestral career, they should absolutely continue their studies with the best possible teacher. Similarly, if a young music educator has the goal of becoming a major university wind conductor, their educational path will be a little different than if the goal is to be a terrific public school teacher. The simple process is how to best ‘pick a path that will lead you to your goal.’” – *J. Whitwell*

“I usually ask my students where they want to be in their lives 10 years from now. Their answer to that question along with other factors (their talent level, personality, predictable success) influence my recommendation on the best route to follow, i.e. if the student is a remarkable performer and wants to make it as a professional musician I recommend the best university which will politically provide the opportunity to achieve that goal, with realistic cautions about the success rate of even the most astonishing performance level they might reach. For the majority of students who wish to become a music educators, I recommend they seek employment immediately in a situation where they can learn what they need to know to become successful and it would be then I feel they should pursue the next degree and study in the areas they lack expertise to be successful. This would be the point when they choose a university to pursue help in the areas where they have recognized their deficiencies, i.e. private lessons on instruments they do not perform to an acceptable level, score study, conducting, etc.” – *D. Hanna*

“Factors I consider when advising someone about to graduate: (a.) How clear-cut is their choice of area of study (conducting, performing, education, etc.)? Some students seem enamored [with] the idea of going to grad[uate] school, yet some do not have the slightest idea what they want to pursue in this narrowing of the study of a particular area of music. (b.) How suitable the person is for the area they think they want? (c.) Do I know of a place that fits the strengths of this person? (d.) How much of a factor are their finances? (e.) Is this person just wanting to go to grad school to put off the inevitable [i.e. ‘going out into the world?’]” – *F. Allen*

“Everyone's personal situation should be taken into account. For some people going straight to graduate school may be the right decision. However, I almost always recommend that a student go teach at least 2-3 years first.” – *B. Kent*

“It really depends on the student’s maturity level. Some students are ready to go into the classroom when they graduate, [while] others could use a little more polish (both professionally and personally) before joining the workforce. It also depends upon the student’s long-term goals; do they have ambitions to teach and/or perform at the university level? If so, I advise students [to go into] graduate school right away. Otherwise, it’s good for students to get out and teach for a couple of years before going back to school.” – *D. Campo*

If you are or ever have been in a position to hire young music educators, what, if any role does their educational route have upon your decision? Specifically, does graduate school experience (or lack thereof) influence your opinion about the applicant?

“Graduate school experience in a young job applicant is a signal to me that I can expect more out of them as a musician. Their breadth and depth of knowledge should be clearly evident in what they bring to the classroom and how they teach music to the students.” – *B. Britt*

“As a public school teacher, academic credentials were not as important in hiring as was evidence of successful teaching experience. In comparing first-year applicants, how they communicated with students while on the podium was far more important than an advanced degree.” – *P. Crider*

“As for hiring, certainly anyone who has demonstrated, proven success as a musician and teacher is higher on the list than someone who does not, whether they have a graduate degree or not. I would tend to look first at someone with a Bachelor’s degree that has proven to have great musicianship and teaching ability, then someone with a Master’s degree and zero experience. *This is not to say I wouldn’t give an inexperienced teacher a chance*, it is just a natural ‘pecking order.’” – *C. Beatty*

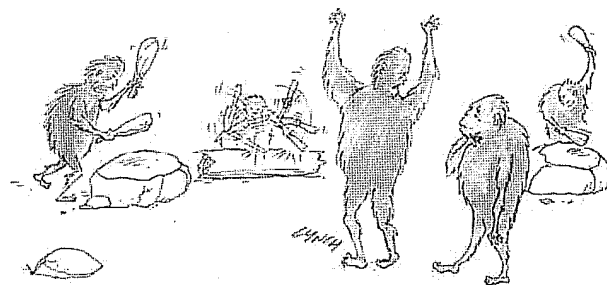
“I have hired many people over the course of my career, and I believe I simply tried to hire the best musician, best teacher, best person, and the best fit for the position. Graduate school experience was never a factor when hiring a teacher for a K-12 position.” – *J. Whitwell*

“Every applicant is different. Graduate school experience can influence my opinion, but I look first at personality, where they went to school (not just college, but high school background), personal achievements, goals, ensembles they have participated in, evidence of leadership skills, evidence of organizational abilities etc. If they meet all this criteria, then the graduate school experience would be a tie-breaker.” – *D. Hanna*

“I had three different assistants while teaching in public school. Having the master's did not play into the decision at all in hiring any of those people. Some grad school experiences may give a person more time on the podium or more time teaching, but there is so much difference between the learning styles/performance capabilities of college bands/students and public school bands/students, that I would personally have to take that into consideration. For example, someone who has just spent two years working with a pep band or 2nd (or 3rd or 4th) band at a university will be used to a certain level of student response to instruction. He/she may be shocked at the playing ability and level of concentration in a middle school band, even a really good one. It's just going to be different: the students have not been playing as long, nor have they fully developed embouchures and playing skills. For that reason, I would not necessarily think that grad school experience has a high correlation with probable success in the public school classroom—the person still has to begin anew in the process of educating at a certain grade level, just like a person coming directly from undergraduate work. There might be a little more correlation of grad school experience with probable success in a high school position, but I would still not base much of my hiring decision on that one factor.” – *F. Allen*

“I don't think that having a Master's degree benefits a first year teacher very much. You can get all the degrees you want, but you are still a first year teacher and there are many things to be learned about teaching that the college classroom simply cannot accomplish.” -- *B. Kent*

“Because of my own experience, I don’t place too much emphasis on a student’s academic path. I do place a good deal of emphasis on grades, however. Because of the way I advise students regarding graduate school, I don’t show preference to students with graduate school experience necessarily. However, it stands to reason that a student who has completed graduate studies deserves serious consideration.” – *D. Campo*



"Maybe if we had a couple other sections. Other than percussion, I mean."

Should graduate school be considered an option for a young music educator or undergraduate student who isn't sure whether they want to teach long-term or not?

"If they aren't sure they want to teach, they should teach. Otherwise they are only dealing with teaching as an abstract concept. After they experience what it is to be a teacher they will either: (1.) Love it, (2.) Realize they have more to learn and commit to doing so whether in grad school or on the job, or (3.) Realize that teaching is NOT what they want to do and move on to finding something that fits them better. Unless they are committed to becoming a performer, a theoretician, or a musicologist, graduate school for someone who is indecisive about teaching is just academic and professional procrastination or the "Peter Pan" syndrome in my opinion." – *B. Britt*

"It depends upon whether or not the individual is committed to becoming a better musician. I find that those who are not certain that they 'want to teach' usually don't have the passion and dedication to become effective teachers...and graduate school only prolongs the moment when this becomes a reality." – *P. Crider*

"Graduate school should be about the individual. In other words, if they want to spend their time and money to advance their knowledge in clarinet, conducting, music education, chemistry, astrophysics, or economics, it doesn't matter. Go advance your knowledge and enjoy, then go do it for a living! Of course everyone should think about their future and make smart decisions to get on a solid path. I am just saying graduate school takes up a lot of time and money, so pick something that you will enjoy *and* will help your future." – *C. Beatty*

"Personally, I would suggest teaching right away for someone who is not sure they would like to teach long-term. They need to get into the classroom and figure out over the next few years if they indeed want to teach. I don't see how graduate school would help anyone decide if they want to teach." – *J. Whitwell*

"No. I do not want anyone teaching for me who is only testing the waters. I want someone who wants to be a band director. Sometimes students who enter college don't know they want to be a band director. Most students are music majors because they like to play their instrument and enjoy making music. At some point in their college career (with the proper guidance) they realize they can make even more glorious music with their teaching skills. It is the encouragement and advice they receive during these years that make the difference." – *D. Hanna*

"I hate to see someone choosing grad school out of fear! Though I do know of one case where a successful grad[uate] school experience changed a student from fearful of the public school classroom to eager to enter the profession. The most ideal circumstance would be that a person enters grad[uate] school in music only when they are musically ready to grow, academically ready to be challenged and emotionally ready to place grad[uate] school into the proper context of a person's complete life plan. Additionally, if the person is going to be a graduate assistant, be prepared to accept responsibility for certain duties, and be prepared for doing some 'grunt' work." – *F. Allen*

"In my opinion, it should not be considered in this situation. If a student is not sure whether he/she wants to teach, then he/she should either not teach or go ahead and try teaching." – *B. Kent*

"Absolutely not! If you're not sure you want to teach, you need to find that out before you invest time, energy and LOTS of money in graduate school. If you discover you love teaching, then go back to grad[uate] school after a few years to develop your skills further. Graduate school should never be a substitute for anything." – *D. Campo*



"The union says as long as it's 'hands-free,' it's allowed."

Do you encourage enrollment in graduate programs that allow an individual to teach and pursue their graduate degree simultaneously, or do you believe one should pursue graduate school full-time?

"I think both of these tracks are fine. Probably a combination of both is the way to get the most out of it. Having constant academic interaction while teaching helps prevent burnout, while complete immersion in a graduate program also provides opportunities for interaction with collegiate students that you cannot get with a part time approach." – *B. Britt*

"I think we face a real danger today with so many young students going directly from undergraduate to graduate school, then finding jobs at a university where they will ultimately be responsible for teaching teachers how to be effective public school music educators without ever having that experience themselves." – *P. Crider*

"Everyone knows his or her own circumstance. For some, taking off 2 years from their job to go to graduate school is not a realistic choice. That's fine. I would encourage anyone to go out and obtain the knowledge and skills they desire in either a residency or a non-residency format. Just be sure to choose a place/teacher(s) that will offer what you want to know with the level of expertise to which you want to be challenged." – *C. Beatty*

"Due to having a young family, I could only pursue a Master's degree in the summers. I would never have been able to take off two years to attend as a full time graduate student. This was a perfect option for me. I do believe, however, that two years spent in residency as a full time graduate student would be of great benefit to anyone who is able to have this experience." – *J. Whitwell*

"This really depends on the student, the type [of] teaching position and the location of the teaching position in relation to a 'qualified' university. A middle school band director can pursue a graduate degree and manage a one course per semester if a university is in a reasonable proximity. A successful high school band director (even assistant) would have difficulty preparing for graduate assignments in the fall. My recommendation would be, if you are close to a university take what you can during the public school year and go to summer school. The next recommendation would be: take what you can during the year or summer and take one year off to finish. It took me five summers (one summer term at a time) to get my masters degree. Later, I went into a doctoral program the same way but never finished because I was not willing to give up a year of residence to complete the degree. The ground rules have changed somewhat on that now and I know some individuals that got their doctorates without interrupting their teaching positions (i.e. Ross Grant [*Director of Bands, Azle H.S., just outside of Ft. Worth.*] Tom Shine, [*Director of Bands, Duncanville I.S.D.*])" – *D. Hanna*

"I think both ways can be successful. Someone who goes to school full-time gets the true meaning of "university," the education that is not part of any class, that can only be gained by being around the process on a daily basis. On-line programs are increasing, and for good reason. Some people cannot leave their public school job for one-quarter (or less!) of their salaries. Some have families, etc. Don't dismiss on-line master's programs: some degrees are combing some on-line coursework (musicology, theory) with some face-to-face courses (conducting, studio lessons, ensembles). Years ago, people had to choose between going full-time into a master's program or going to school in the summers. Now there is a third option with on-line degrees, with some, much or even all of the degree available on-line." – *F. Allen*

"This depends on the individual student's personal situation. For some students it is not an option to attend graduate school full time. However, if one can at all make it happen, going full time is the best way to go in order to maximize your learning and exposure to every aspect of the university where you attend." – *B. Kent*



"Pardon me for saying this – but you need to be more of a control freak."

CLINICIAN BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES



REAGAN A. BRUMLEY is the Associate Director of Bands and Low Brass Specialist at Lake Highlands High School in the Richardson Independent School District where he serves as conductor of the Symphonic Band and assists with the Marching Band. Prior to Mr. Brumley's appointment at Lake Highlands, he served as Assistant Director at Red Oak High School where he was responsible for directing all outdoor marching rehearsals. During Brumley's tenure the Red Oak Marching band won their class and was named a finalist at the UTA Marching Festival, earned unanimous First Division ratings at UIL Marching Contest, and received the highest ranking at Area Marching Contest in school history. High School and Junior High Concert Ensembles under Brumley's direction have received First Division ratings at UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Contest, and the Texas A&M University-Commerce Marching Band, for which he served as Co-Director, has been the featured exhibition band at several marching festivals around the North and East Texas areas. Prior to joining the Red Oak Band staff, Brumley served as a graduate assistant in the band department at Texas A&M University-Commerce. While serving in this position he earned the Master of Music in Wind Conducting. He has also served as a low brass and leadership clinician around Texas, and recently presented a clinic to the College Division of the Texas Music Educators Association. Reagan and his wife Dr. Cayce Harness-Brumley, a recent graduate of the University of Texas-Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, are both originally from the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and currently reside in Richardson.



BRETT A. RICHARDSON is the Assistant Director of Bands at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas where he conducts the Symphonic Band, assists with the Lumberjack Marching Band, directs the "Roarin' Buzzsaws" Men's and Women's Basketball Pep Bands, team-teaches undergraduate conducting, and supervises student teachers. He holds a Master of Music degree in Wind Conducting from Texas A&M University-Commerce (formerly East Texas State University) under Brad Kent and Jeff Gershman and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Stephen F. Austin State University under Fred J. Allen. Prior to his appointment at Stephen F. Austin State University, Mr. Richardson taught instrumental music in the public schools of Texas at Downing Middle School (Lewisville Independent School District) in Flower Mound with Mr. Steve Smith and at Creekside Intermediate School (Clear Creek Independent School District) in League City with Mrs. Julie Jezek. Bands under his direction have earned Texas UIL "Sweepstakes" Awards, along with "Best-in-Class" and "Outstanding Overall Performance" awards at contests in Houston and Austin. While at Downing, Mr. Richardson had the distinct privilege of serving as the Associate Conductor of the Downing Middle School Symphonic Band at their performance for the 2005 Midwest Clinic in Chicago, Illinois. Before accepting the position in the Lewisville Independent School District, he served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the University Bands at Texas A&M University-Commerce. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at SFA, Mr. Richardson also remains active as a clinician in the public schools of East Texas and in several different areas of professional development. Besides participating at numerous conducting symposia and workshops, he has also recently presented a clinic designed for the College Student Division at the Texas Music Educators Association Clinic/Convention in San Antonio, Texas. His professional affiliations include the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association, College Music Society, and Kappa Kappa Psi. He is a proud native of Houston, Texas.