

# Is Music Like Sports?

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

We've all heard discussions about various aspects of the school curriculum, and how we must expose our students to every aspect of the human growth and development cycle. Clearly everyone in the field of education is eager to create the most substantive learning agenda possible for each and every student within the framework of his/her educational journey. Such a goal requires choices; i.e., what areas-of-study should be offered to our students and what subjects should be viewed as electives? The arts (music) and athletics (sports) are a major focal point of the scheduling puzzle: Should a student be able to be in sports AND music, or do they need to make a choice? Unfortunately it often comes down to an "either/or" decision based on

a distorted perspective that says: "Music is just like sports." If we, as music educators, do not challenge such logic, we have missed a great opportunity to educate administrators, teachers,

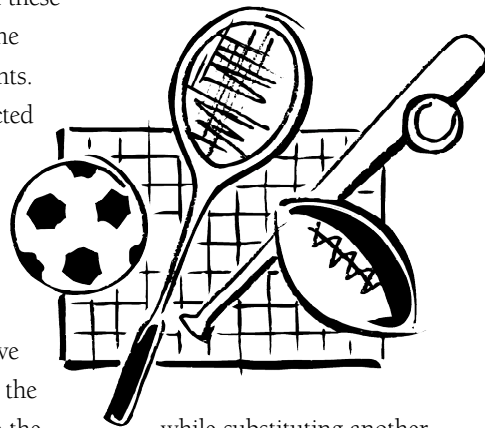
parents, community leaders, and students. While there are many similarities in the way we approach both music and sports; teamwork, cooperation, confidence building, selflessness, etc., there are countless differences, and it is within these differences we can define the benefits we offer our students.

An athletic team is restricted to so many members who are involved at any given time, and if you aren't "in the game," you are "on the bench." A basketball team will not allow more than five players on the floor during the game. Music directors have the freedom and flexibility to alter the size of the ensemble based on the number of people who want to participate. For the most part there

is no limit to the size of the marching band, the percussion ensemble, or the concert orchestra. While musical discretion may dictate a certain number of performers, we are not restricted by any set of

competitive rules. To stretch the analogy, "Everyone is a varsity player."

For the most part, we don't have a "bench." Unlike our athletic counterparts, we can't "rest a player"



while substituting another individual with the same skills. During the football game the coach has the license to shuffle various players in and out of play. If a member of the team simply isn't performing well, a substitution is made and the game continues. Once the concert begins, the conductor cannot rely on a reservoir of "fresh musicians" to tap (at his/her will) throughout the performance. (Can you envision having an entirely new trumpet section walk in during the last minute of the piece to replace the tired players?) All musicians are "in the game" from beginning to end.

You play "ON the team," but you play "IN the band." That

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miniscule prepositional difference may be the very essence of why music is not like sports. Band/orchestra/choir is a place for everyone. Music educators welcome all those who are interested in pursuing the art of musical expression. While we always are excited about gaining a gifted young musician, we are equally as thrilled with every student who wants to be a part of the ensemble, and we find an avenue where this individual can feel a sense of importance and personal contribution to the group.

The basic goal of any sports team is to create a victory to win, to outlast the opponent. In this case the motivation is (for the most part) extrinsic; to win the trophy, to become the champion. The fundamental end-result of a band/orchestra/choir is a connection with the audience. The musician is not focused on defeating an opponent, but reaching the listener. This is attained through the ongoing development of a level of skills availing oneself to a higher level of creative communication. The motivation is intrinsic, there is no final result or definitive score, it is merely the next step along the artistic pathway.

This is certainly not a matter of “either/or.” It is not a case of athletics vs. arts, music vs. sports, but rather a viewpoint of the basic differences experienced by the players/performers. If someone asks, “Should a child choose music or sports?” The most responsible answer would be, “Yes.” Each creates unique benefits and positive learning experiences that will translate to every facet of life. There are countless similarities as well as many obvious differences.

As we continue our evolutionary quest to offer our youth the finest education possible, we must approach it with an open mind, a passion for what we do, and a commitment to educating those who join us in our professional mission. “It’s our likenesses that bring us together, but it’s our differences that keep us together.”  
STRIKE UP THE BAND!

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*Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a well-known name in the music education world as a teacher, clinician, author, composer, consultant, adjudicator, and above all, a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence. His own career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. During this time Tim developed highly acclaimed groups in all areas of the instrumental and vocal field. Following three years in the music industry, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, an organization designed to manage the many requests for workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of positive attitude and effective leadership training. He presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University. Tim also is the Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, and he serves as the national spokesperson for MENC’s “Make a Difference with Music” program. Tim’s books, produced by G.I.A. Publication, The Art of Successful Teaching and The Joy of Inspired Teaching, are best sellers in the music profession. He is also co-author of Hal Leonard’s popular band method, Essential Elements, as well as the creator of the highly-acclaimed Director’s Communication Kits.*

*Tim is a graduate of Ball State University and the University of Alabama. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree from VanderCook College of Music. Additional awards include the distinguished Sudler Order of Merit from the John Philip Sousa Foundation, Mr. Holland’s Opus Award and the Music Industry Award from the Midwest Clinic Board of Directors.*