

Transition Tips

Challenges for the New Band Director

Joel L. Weisberg

So you've acquired a new position, found a place to live, unpacked, received keys to the band hall, and just finished copying the parts to the Hindemith Symphony...what next? We all

start a new job with the very best of intentions and lofty goals, but are there some steps to follow that can substantially help us in our journey? This article was put together in order to suggest some good places to begin.

Introductions are VERY important!

After meeting your building administration and fellow directors, it is a good idea to meet with your booster president, student officers, and senior class. The booster president needs to know your philosophies and is a great person to help you get acclimated to your new community. The student officers and seniors will appreciate a "private" meeting with their new director. This meeting can be extremely beneficial towards setting the tone for a positive

experience together. There is no substitute for starting your year with students, parents, and administrators who are excited about what is to come under your direction.

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The yearly calendar is the next place to turn your attention. In order to place all the academic months into proper perspective, preparing a yearly calendar is a super idea. This can be as good for you as it is for your students and parents. When organizing this calendar, you should try including

as much information pertaining to your school year as possible. Grading periods, football games, SAT/ACT testing dates, TAKS testing dates, UIL activities, summer band dates, concert dates, booster meetings, audition dates, trip dates, graduation, prom, band banquet, and any end-of-the-year camp dates are all good things to include. Once completed, check to make sure that all your band dates are included on the school's master calendar. This may seem

like a daunting task as you start your tenure, but a comprehensive calendar will help organize the year...and this same showing of organization will be greatly appreciated by your community when they receive it!

Proofreading the last director's handbook should be next on the list. Even if you have your own that has been on disk since the 80's, it's not a bad idea to look for past traditions, requirements, and rules to which your students are accustomed. The more knowledgeable you are of their past, the easier it will be to institute your own expectations, goals, and rules. In addition, updating and copying the standard school forms used at the beginning of the year will save you tons of time later. These forms might include a medical information/release sheet, UIL participation form, equipment order form, handbook acknowledgement, marching band compliance sheet, syllabus, etc.

An assistant, or other faculty member can be an invaluable help. Every school has traditions, pre-game activities, pep rallies, and other standard events throughout the year that might not be so

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standard for you. A remaining faculty member and/or assistant can be a tremendous resource for this information. Using last year's calendar as a reference can help plan for the future. While doing the month-to-month review you will get a clearer vision of what your group has done in the past, and in turn will help you put together a game plan for a successful year!

Many directors rely on experience to help guide us through the school year. I hope that some of these suggestions will serve you well (veteran teachers and rookies as well) as you start a new job and organize yourself to tackle another year! Among the many reasons we chose this profession was to have FUN!

In order to achieve our objective, it never hurts to be organized, positive, and realistic about your goals for the first year.

With all this being said, try to remember that we must MAKE time for what is important. Helping to instill a love for music and music performance is wonderful, but we don't get a second chance to be a good spouse or to watch our kids grow up! Congratulations on your new position...now I'll let you get back to that Hindemith Symphony.

Joel L. Weisberg is currently the Director of Bands at Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio, Texas. A Texas Tech University graduate, Mr. Weisberg has worked in Big Spring, Jayton, Lubbock, and McKinney Texas. Mr. Weisberg is honored to be an active clinician and judge throughout Texas.