

# So You Want to be an Administrator?

**Michael Brashear**

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Did you say that you want to be an administrator? You have enjoyed a successful run as a band director, it is time for another challenge, and you are considering moving into administration. Or maybe you are early in your career and you have the foresight to look far into the future. Or maybe you are still in college and are just dreaming about your future as an educator. Regardless of where you fit into this scenario, I hope that my thoughts will help you as you plan for your future.

When Al Sturchio asked me to write this article, my first thought was, why me? At that time, I had a grand total of six months under my belt as the Director of Fine Arts in the Richardson ISD. So I put him off until I had more experience. Now with a whole nine months under my belt, I feel much more qualified to write this article. All kidding aside, I am willing to share my thoughts about becoming an administrator; and as a TBA Past President, it is very difficult to say no to Al when he asks for an article. Therefore, here is my story.

I had just finished thirty years as a band director, and quite frankly, that is all I ever wanted

to do. I never really set out to become a music administrator. However, last April I found myself in a very unique situation resulting in the offer to become the next Director of Fine Arts for Richardson ISD. This job had not turned over in 34 years, and I figured it was now or never—I certainly could not wait another 34 years for the opportunity!

This would be a good option for me and my family, and would certainly be a worthwhile and rewarding way to complete my career in public education. I was fortunate to have spent the last thirteen years as the Director of Bands at Berkner High School, and I enjoyed a great relationship with Dr. Michael Mammaing, who was our Director of Fine and Performing Arts. I was honored to follow him as an administrator in Richardson, and I felt like this would be my way to give something back to the district that had provided me with so many opportunities as a band director.

So, if you want to become an administrator, I would suggest that you first decide what your reasons are for making this change. Are these your top reasons?

- You are ready to be the boss

- You are sick and tired of marching rehearsals
- You are tired of going to high school football games
- You cannot think about one more trip on a school bus
- You are fed up with parent conferences
- You can't stand the thought of writing one more lesson plan
- Your intonation problems just won't go away
- You are tired of dealing with student discipline
- You can't stand your principal
- You want more time off

While these reasons may cause all of us to think at times about doing something other than teaching band, these are really not good reasons to go into administration. Even without the 7am marching rehearsals, the weekly football games, or daily sectionals, there are many other demands placed on your time. After attending rehearsals and performances for band, choir, orchestra, theatre, and elementary music for the entire district, you quickly realize that you may be spending as much or more time than you did as a band director. Even though you have fewer parent conferences,

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the unhappy parents you visit with now may be even more challenging since they could not resolve the conflict with the director at their campus. If you are frustrated working with your principal, how about working with 48 principals, each with concerns about their specific campus? You will now have to be able to justify financial requests for your entire department—not just your band program—to upper level administration. Even though you will no longer design weekly lesson plans, you will be responsible for staff development for all of your teachers. Furthermore, you have to have a pretty thick skin because you cannot please everyone all the time. So, if the previous reasons are why you want to become an administrator, I would suggest you reconsider!

However, if after giving this considerable thought, you find some of the following reasons on your list, you are probably headed in the right direction:

- You want to broaden your influence in your district
- You have a vision for the fine arts in your district
- You want to serve as the top fine arts advocate for your district
- You want to be involved in recruiting and hiring outstanding teachers
- You want to serve as a mentor to young teachers
- You think your leadership will inspire teachers to achieve at a higher level
- You have the ability to budget funds wisely for your programs and get more bang for your buck
- You are able to communicate effectively with staff, administration, and community about your program, and you enjoy communication
- You have good people skills
- You enjoy solving problems
- You are able to see the “big picture”
- You can experience a sense of fulfillment when

your staff and their students excel, rather than your own band performing well or winning major honors

After changing jobs, I went through a period of transition. I shifted gears from being the Director of Bands at Berkner to becoming the RISD Director of Fine Arts. I quickly developed a much broader perspective in order to support all of our programs. I attended rehearsals and performances for band, choir, orchestra, theatre, and elementary music. I made sure that staff members recognized my genuine support for the entire fine arts program, not just the band program.

I like the challenge of solving problems and having time to develop a vision that will serve our district well into the future. I enjoy being a team player with upper administration in our district, and as a result of that relationship, being able to protect the future of our programs. One of the most rewarding aspects of this job is the opportunity to recruit, hire, and mentor young teachers for our district. My desire to continue the strong fine arts program in Richardson is the driving force behind my reason to leave my job as a band director and go into administration.

If you relate to these reasons for wanting to become an administrator, I would encourage you to go for it and I offer these suggestions to help you prepare for your future:

- Begin work on an advanced degree in administration, especially if you do not have a Masters Degree. Check with your district and others to see what their requirements are for employment as a Director of Fine Arts.
- Become the very best band director you can possibly be. In order to be an effective leader, you must have the respect from those you lead. A good track record with your own band program will certainly help!

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- Accept all opportunities to serve on local school committees.
- Work as a “team player” with other fine arts teachers on your campus.
- Be as involved as possible in all administrative aspects of your program. Be a “hands on” person when it comes to managing your band budget, giving direction to and working with your booster organization, building classroom schedules for your staff, and setting long term goals for your program.
- Learn to delegate tasks to your staff; you can’t do it all yourself. Don’t forget to follow up and hold staff members accountable for completion of tasks.
- Learn to give the praise to everyone else, but take the blame when something goes wrong.
- Volunteer for any opportunity to write or revise curriculum.
- Become a leader in your professional organizations.
- Seek out opportunities to present sessions for staff development or at a TBA clinic.

- Volunteer to assist your principal and administration with recruiting, interviewing, and mentoring new staff members.

After having served nine months as Director of Fine Arts in the Richardson ISD, I am pleased with my decision to make this career move. I loved being a band director for 30 years, and secretly I would even admit that I still enjoyed teaching marching band! I still miss being with the students and several fine arts administrators tell me that this feeling never goes away. However, I am able to stay connected with the band world through judging and serving as a clinician and guest conductor. A few weeks into this school year, I finally realized how this change has affected me. Being a band director is who I was—that was my identity. Not only did I teach kids, but I was a BAND DIRECTOR. Then I changed jobs. It is a great job, a rewarding and important job. But it is a job for me, not my identity. At least, not yet!

*Michael Brashear is in his first year as Director of Fine Arts for the Richardson ISD. He is responsible for the entire fine arts program which includes Secondary Band, Choir, Orchestra, and Theatre and Elementary Music. Prior to this year, Mr. Brashear completed his thirtieth year as a band director and his thirteenth year as Director of Bands and Chairman of the Fine Arts Department at L.V. Berkner High School in Richardson ISD. Prior to his tenure in Richardson, Mr. Brashear taught in the Cypress-Fairbanks, Spring Branch, and Irving public schools. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Tarleton State University and a Master of Music Education degree from the University of North Texas.*

*Bands under Mr. Brashear’s leadership have won many awards, including selection as “Best in Class” at numerous festivals, selection as finalist in the Texas Music Educators State Honor Band competitions, and selection as finalist in the Texas State Marching Contest. In December 2000, the Berkner Band performed at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago.*

*In 1998, Mr. Brashear was one of fifteen teachers in Texas to win the UIL-Southwestern Bell Sponsor Excellence Award, and one of eight Richardson ISD teachers awarded the RISE Foundation “Excellence in Teaching” award. He is an active member of the Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Mu. In 2004, he was honored by being elected to membership in the prestigious American Bandmasters Association.*

*Active in the professional community, Mr. Brashear served for seven years on the board of directors of the Texas Bandmasters Association and was president of that organization in 2003. He is a member of the Texas Music Educators Association, in which he served as a region officer. Mr. Brashear is active in the Southwest as a band clinician and guest conductor. He frequently serves as an adjudicator and is a member of the Texas Music Adjudicators Association. He is currently serving on the UIL Prescribed Music List Committee. Michael and his wife Priscilla, who teaches music at Yale Elementary in the Richardson ISD, reside in Richardson with their children, Robert and Sarah.*