

Rewind and Start Again

It is Never Too Late to Make Things Right *Suggestions to Young Teachers*

Barbara Lambrecht

Finis Origine Pendet – The end depends upon the beginning.

So, school has started. You are in the second grading period, and your plans for a problem-free year have evaporated. Your classes are not progressing at the rate you had hoped. Discipline has deteriorated.

You are of the mind-set that you need to be like a postage stamp and stick to one thing until you are there, but your destination seems farther now than it was back in August when school began.

You know you need a plan to succeed as a band director, but your plan doesn't seem to be working.

My husband Rick Lambrecht insists that not only do you need a plan, but you need to stick with that plan. He maintains that the day you finally give up on your plan is the day it was going to work. My contention is that sometimes, you have to consider that another plan might work better for your situation.

Last fall, two second-year teachers confided to me that they were quite excited about the start of school. Now, they told me, they could make corrections in mistakes they had made their rookie year. Now, they would have a different discipline plan, different process

and procedure that would work for their school, their student population.

Don't wait an entire year to fix your problems. "Failure" of your plan merely means you have another opportunity to start over and get it right. If your classroom management plan has gone awry, consider these things: consistently start instruction on time and set the example you want your students to follow.

Approach incidents with fairness, perspective, and consistency. Don't let your emotions cloud your reactions and decisions. You have two choices of attitude in the classroom: positive or neutral. You are not allowed to be outwardly negative.

Often the problems that arise are not actually discipline problems. They are instead glitches in the process and procedure. If that's the case in your rehearsals/classes, practice the process and procedure.

If students are unruly upon entering your rehearsal space, take them back into the hallway and practice how they are to enter your room. Remind them how you want

them to come in. Perhaps you need to line them up and have them file in, single file, silently. Explain exactly what you want. Explain exactly what to do. Demonstrate how to do it. Explain why to do it.

Approach discipline for what it is — refining behavior to meet established criteria.

Discipline is not punishment; and remember, punishment is but one means to secure a desired behavior.

Perhaps you are not on target with the goals you set for mastery. Ask yourself this: Are lessons driven by the pace of the curriculum or the pace of the students? The length of the class period, the innate intelligence of the students, even the time of day the class occurs can affect the pace

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of learning. Be flexible. Keep your students number one in your plans.

On the other hand, I also suggest you expect more and tolerate less. Expect high performance and tolerate less distracting behavior. Teach your students to aim high and to consider themselves capable of great things. Expect the same of yourself. Be patient, for patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.

If you are struggling, ask for help from veteran or more experienced teachers. They will be more than happy to share their wealth of knowledge, to help to mentor you, and to share what has worked for them in the past. Remember, “master” teachers do not know everything, but they do know where to find it.

As for your master teaching plan, realize that teaching and dealing with students is a continuous cycle, an evolving process. Every week, make a plan, and at the end of the week evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Adapt the plan for the following week and start the cycle all over again.

Texas Bandmasters Association hosts clinics during the year in addition to the annual Convention/Clinic in San Antonio. Perhaps in your community there is a chapter of YES, Young Educator Seminars started by Lynne Jackson at SMU about five years ago.

TheYellowBoard.com is another place you can go for answers to your questions/problems.

It’s never too late to be what you could have been. And, “wisdom,” as Jessica Tandy the famous actress has said, “is learning from all your experiences, which means maybe you don’t make the same mistakes over and over again.”

I wish you all the best as you pursue your career in teaching music to young people. There is no higher calling than education. You can and will make mistakes. Admit them; laugh at them; you can even point them out. Perfection is hard to live up to. Your students and their parents will admire and respect your pursuit of perfection, but like and love you when they see you are truly no more perfect than they are.

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Barbara Lambrecht received her education at Texas Tech University and the University of North Texas. She has recently retired after forty-two years of teaching band at every level, from elementary through university. In 2009 Barbara was inducted into the Texas Bandmasters Hall of Fame, and was instrumental in creating El Paso’s Edge of Texas Concert Band. She presently serves as music director and conductor of the band.

Mrs. Lambrecht, wife of UTEP Horn Professor and assistant conductor for The Edge, Richard Lambrecht, has written for and served as Contributing Editor for The Instrumentalist. She also writes and arranges music for band. Hal Leonard, E.C. Schirmer, and RBC Music Publishers publish her band pieces.

Honored numerous times by her colleagues, Mrs. Lambrecht has been the recipient of Texas Tech University’s Distinguished Music Educator Award, Tau Beta Sigma’s national Outstanding Service to Music Award, the Texas Chamber of Commerce Cultural Award, National Band Association Achievement Award, Texas Music Educators Association Achievement Award, and twice had her “day” proclaimed by the city council. Most recently she was chosen as one of the 2000 Outstanding Musicians of the 20th Century, and was named to Who’s Who of American Women.

Her bands were named State Honor Band in both Texas and New Mexico, received the John Philip Sousa Foundation’s Sudler Cup, performed at The Midwest Clinic, played on the White House lawn for President Ronald Reagan, was selected Most Outstanding Band at numerous competitions, and marched in the Washington D. C. Independence Day parade.

Barbara currently mentors young directors in the El Paso area, works with bands across the city, teaches flute sectionals and lessons, and subs with the Roswell Symphony Orchestra. She is an active clinician, adjudicator, and conductor across the United States.