

# Developing the Leaders of Tomorrow

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It is commonly believed that our students are enrolled in school to learn life skills and to build a wealth of knowledge to become productive men and women in society. Undoubtedly, math and science, history and language classes provide that knowledge and develop skills that can be applied to everything from a meal preparation, banking and purchasing, to working at any number of professions. Less often however, is a student confronted with his/her skills to be an effective leader, or trained to become an entrepreneur or CEO. Where is the student encouraged to think outside the box, taught how to delegate, or lead a group of peers?

Most of us know the answer to that question but still band is often considered dispensable to the educational system, as budget cuts and scheduling dilemmas attest. Too often those not involved in the band activity consider this elective to be simply about music and nothing more. Though awareness is growing and statistics increasingly confirm the extraordinary opportunities music education presents for students to excel in life, it is often overlooked or marginalized under the weight of more traditional subjects. However, to those familiar with the activity, band is known to be an exceptional proving ground for strong leaders of the future.

Even though relatively few high school students go on to become musicians or music educators themselves, virtually all of them become well acquainted with the

inner drive and learn how to harness its power to achieve individually and as a meaningful member of a group. Leadership opportunities in band are plentiful and provide a significant platform for personal growth and development.

Many of you have experienced great success and have obtained many awards for having exceptional programs. However, the true success is holding fast to the belief that it's all about developing students today to become highly competent and honorable citizens tomorrow. *So the question is:* What are we teaching? Success can be obtained by teaching life skills first and technical skills second. They are like the two wheels of a bicycle. Both are virtually important to the success of each individual and your program as a whole.

If you want continued success in developing these leaders you have to have a plan (or map.) Consider a scenario where two people are dropped (separately) into the wilderness and told that there is a town thirty miles west of them. Now imagine that one has a map and the other has nothing. Who do you think will reach the town first? The man with the map of course. Why is that?

The person without the map could easily determine West by the setting sun, but without landmarks to guide him he could easily miss his/her goal or he/she might struggle with self-doubt as the time passes without reference to the distance they have traveled.

If you are just plodding along (Westward bound) on a day to day

basis with your program, how can you ever expect to find your destination? Do you even have a destination?

The best way to make your map is to first locate your destination. Then it is helpful to consult a person that has already traveled your path and let them give you landmarks to achieve. This is the process by which successful band programs operate.

Below are four questions which will help you to locate your landmarks on the path to success on which you should focus your energies.

## **1. Goals.**

What targets and incentives do you have in place to ensure that you blast through your program goals?

## **2. Recruiting.**

What are the top three recruiting strategies that you are going to use in order to build your program?

## **3. Relationships.**

What is your plan to identify the key characteristics of your key student leaders and then adjust your plan to be a magnet for more of them?

## **4. Teamwork.**

What is your plan to make sure that your students are loyal and aggressive in achieving their goals?

Bravo to the band directors, musicians and advocates who have embraced the challenge to take on the daily grind of music education and translate it into something much more significant and meaningful. Giving students the opportunity to take responsibility, to lead, perform and succeed, continues to make the band activity a vital part of the educational process.