

The Keys to Program Success

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“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.”

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe
(1749-1832, German Poet, Dramatist, Novelist)

We all want to enjoy the benefits of professional success, and in our effort to arrive at this goal we often find ourselves constantly working to attain the level of proficiency required to be deemed successful by our colleagues, our supervisors, our students, our communities, etc. **What are the requisites for success in the field of music education? Are they:**

- Developing a balanced program in both performance, pedagogy, substantive curriculum, school pride, and community involvement?
- Receiving an invitation to perform in a national spotlight event with other stellar musical groups?
- Becoming the flagship of the community and being constantly recognized for outstanding musical achievements accompanied with public accolades?
- Having a large number of student musicians qualify for various honor groups?
- Developing many students who pursue music in their college life?

Do we really know the “blueprint of program success,” or is this all a combination of opinions generated by others in our profession? Isn’t the answer to each of the above questions, a resounding, “YES!”? While we certainly have many guidelines to ensure we are moving in a positive direction, there are many variations of the success-theme template.

Perhaps if we look at it from a different perspective, we can understand more about this perplexing question by studying other successful directors, those who have traversed the pathway-of-excellence. Herein lies an important component we often overlook as we develop our own

programs. What is it that makes this educator a resounding success? The answer, while complicated, appears to be rather simple:

- A command of the needed skills, combined with an ongoing study for self-improvement. Veteran teachers know, “The more you know, the more you don’t know.” It is imperative we continue to refine our musical talents/skills while embracing the latest in the evolving world of technology.
- A relentless work ethic unknown in common hours. There truly is no shortcut to success. The shortcut is, in fact, the ongoing personal commitment to achieving quality in each and

every aspect of our personal and professional lives.

- A genuine love for students and a passion to share music with these impressionable young minds. The teachers who have a lasting impact on their students are those who exude a love-of-music combined with a heartfelt desire to enrich the lives of their “learners” by bringing music to their lives.

The master teachers see everyone as a potential musician; their entire world is a classroom. The successful teachers have learned to make the process (the journey) as well as the product (the destination) a joyful journey. What an incredible responsibility we have; what a remarkable opportunity we have.

- A giving spirit eager to convey the immeasurable benefits of music-making to everyone; students, parents, fellow faculty members, and ALL. The *master teachers* see everyone as

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a potential musician; their entire world is a classroom. Music education isn't something THEY DO, it is something THEY ARE.

- A sense of inclusion, group ownership, with countless ways to become involved at any level. Successful music educators have opened their perspective to see music learning goes far beyond teaching notes and rhythms; it is about “bringing people to music” in whatever way is possible.

- A thankful and appreciative attitude linked with a growing visionary plan for program growth and development. While the outstanding music teachers always recognize and acknowledge the positive achievements of their students and supporters, they are never satisfied or complacent with the status quo; the goal of *quality music education* is fluid as they “raise the bar” with each accomplishment.

It would be easy to point to this success list as platitudes; however, let me suggest they are the cornerstone values that serve as the foundation for every *master teacher*. They are available to all of us, there is no mandatory degree or recommended preparatory curriculum, and the payment plan of personal investment will last a professional lifetime.

There is a somewhat of a paradox in all of this, and it comes from the notion, “Work means struggle, discomfort, extra effort, inconvenience, etc.” ENJOYment (being in the presence of JOY) is usually the result of achieving or

accomplishing a given task. We enjoy the victory of a “job well done.” We feel a sense of group pride and personal fulfillment following a great concert. We applaud our efforts at the conclusion of the performance. In many ways, JOY is the final reward; however the successful teachers have learned to make the *process (the journey)* as well as the *product (the destination)* a joyful journey. This does not suggest everything is “all roses” along the pathway, but rather than awaiting the final step on the summit, there are many acknowledgments of small successes along the way. Let us not confuse this with false praise or undeserved compliments; it is merely the recognition of forward progress. *Encouragement* (to offer *courage* to individuals) serves as the fuel to perpetuate positive momentum. Every rehearsal, meeting, lesson, or conversation is approached with a sense of purposeful possibilities as an opportunity for betterment.

Ultimately, our life tends to mirror our individual thoughts and beliefs. We have a choice, and the outcome of our lives will be a reflection of the choices we make. As educators we know our students, likewise, reflect and replicate our actions, habits, language, and attitudes; what an incredible responsibility we have; what a remarkable opportunity we have. To this end, let us pledge ourselves to choose excellence as the standard for everything we do, and *enjoy* the journey from beginning to end.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

Tim Lautzenheiser is a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence and a passion for high level achievement. His career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following his tenure at the university level, he spent three years with McCormick's Enterprises working as Executive Director of Bands of America. In 1981, Tim created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., 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. Over two million students have experienced his acclaimed student leadership workshops over the last three decades. He presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc. In addition, he continues his rigorous travel schedule touting the importance of arts education for every child.

His books, produced by G.I.A. Publications, Inc., continue to be bestsellers in the educational world. He is also co-author of popular band method Essential Elements and is the Senior Educational Consultant for Hal Leonard, Inc. Tim is the Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All and NAMM (The International Music Products Association).

Tim holds degrees from Ball State University and the University of Alabama. In 1995 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the VanderCook College of Music. He is presently an adjunct faculty member at Ball State University (Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer), Indiana-Purdue/Ft. Wayne University, and Butler University. In addition, he serves on The Midwest Clinic Board of Directors and the Western International Band Clinic/American Band College Board of Directors.