

The Trilogy of Successful Educators

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

Having spent multiple decades traveling (throughout our nation and around the globe) working with outstanding music programs and first class music educators, it is ever-apparent there are countless pathways to success. For certain there is no ONE WAY to create and grow an ongoing culture of artistic excellence; instead we can point to many different examples of high level achievement being generated with a myriad of blueprints.

There are some similarities evident in the way one puts together his/her own “magical potion” that brings about a buffet of musical opportunities to and for students, parents, administrators, and all. Of course the exemplary teacher/band director is, first and foremost, a lifetime learning-growing musician. The focus on musical-quality is the **absolute foundation** and everything else is built on that bedrock of reality. From there on, it is a matter of availing everyone to the infinite benefits of music-learning and music-making. Some of the great teachers reveal very charismatic personalities, some are quiet leaders who are almost invisible at times, some are master politicians who can bring about consensus with anyone/everyone,

some are effective delegators offering ownership to various members of the culture, and some are combinations of all the aforementioned character attributes. With that said, here’s what I have discovered are the three commonalities of those who continue to meet the highest of professional standards. They have:

1. THE ABILITY TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS.

We open our minds and our hearts (especially) to those WE TRUST. We tend to be skeptical and protective when it comes to those we don’t trust. While the curriculum is (for the most part) the same in many ways, the WAY we teach WHAT we teach often overrides WHAT we teach. Everyone has many examples of the fledgling band program that cannot seem to gain any shred of positive momentum, then along comes a new enthusiastic band director and MAGIC seems to happen immediately. Enrollment increases, quality in every aspect of the band elevates, and the band takes on a new personality with students eager to commit their time effort and energies to the organization with the understanding TRUSTING the leader will help them reach their

collective goals. Conversely, we also are aware of the awarding winning band program boasting a tradition of superior achievements, and when the former director is replaced with a different individual, things begin to unravel all too quickly. What’s the difference? It is the LEVEL OF TRUST established by each director. In this case, director #1 has garnered the TRUST of those involved with the program and therefore it has focused their dedicated efforts in a synergistic outcome. Director #2 has NOT been able to connect with all areas of personnel (students, parents, administrators, etc.,) and thus the energy subsides and forward progress is halted as things begin to unravel.

2. THE WHEREWITHAL TO “FOCUS THE EGO.”

The EGO drives us and the EGO can inadvertently sabotage us. When we understand the endless possibilities of any/all situations, it is important to “step up to the plate,” wrap our arms around the challenges and **lead the band** to new heights. However, if the REASON(s) to reach the goals is based on the director’s self-promotion, then there is an inauthenticity certain to bring one to an ill-fated destination. On the other hand, if the invested I/me EGO-energy is the given fuel to advance the program to offer a new awareness of musical benefits to/for the students (and the entire community), then EVERYONE is the winner.

The EGO can be our most valued partner, or it can become a “foolish

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misguided friend” in support of a selfish agenda. The constant monitoring of WHY we are making this or that decision/choice is the key. The WE/US choices must take precedence of the I/ME decisions.

3. THE TALENTS AND SKILLS TO CREATE “WHAT ISN’T.”

It’s an unusual statement, isn’t it? How does one go about creating WHAT ISN’T? First, one must **determine** “what really isn’t.” Perhaps “what isn’t” is an organized office, or a clean band hall, or a greater commitment to home practice, or a wonderful relationship with the administration, or a thriving booster group, or superb intonation, or a robust recruitment template, or appropriate rehearsal disciplines,

or several thriving chamber ensembles, or a favorable relationship with fellow directors, or more responsible student leaders, or, or, or, or. When we embrace the idea of CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT (Japanese: KAIZEN), we will see “what isn’t” is infinite. We can never get to the end of the WHAT ISN’T list; it is constantly growing, shifting, changing, advancing. For those who are eager to become outstanding band directors/teachers/educators, be it known, maintenance is not growth; GROWTH IS GROWTH, and growth requires the ongoing creation of “what isn’t.”

The insightful bit of wisdom: “**Argue for your limitations and you get to own them,**” comes into play when seeking “what isn’t.” If we refuse to consider adding some aspect of “what isn’t” to the planning board because of any perceived limitations, then it is a pointless exercise in the first place. “What isn’t” is merely “what is” waiting to happen.

A music educator/band director may be in the best posture of any teacher in the school to MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT on everyone (not just students, but EVERYONE) who has any connection with THE BAND. Let us all pledge ourselves to artistic excellence by continuing to develop trusting relationships while laser-focusing our I/me energies as we continue to bring “what isn’t” to our professional landscapes.

· “Strike up the Band!”

Dr. 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 and three years with McCormick’s Enterprises working as Executive Director of Bands of America. In 1981, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., an organization designed to manage the requests for presentations. Dr. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All and NAMM (The International Music Products Association) and is 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.