

“If You Build It, They Will Come”

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“If You Build It, They Will Come” ...a great adapted line from the movie *A Field of Dreams*. In that movie we learn the more time, attention, effort, and thought you apply to an idea the more likely it is that something can and will come of it. Now there are certainly no guarantees but at least planting the seed and tending to it increases the odds that it'll grow something. So, BUILD away! PLANT away!

We have so many challenges with the academic demands on our band students. We must be great “farmers” and create unique musical crops that our students simply can't resist. The more comprehensive program you build (and plant a variety of musical opportunities) then you increase the odds of them coming and STAYING. We've all been to those farmer's markets where we think “I want to try that... and that...and that!”

The inverse, however, has more certainty. If you pay no attention to an idea and make no effort to manifest it, you decrease the odds of it materializing. It does mean extra effort and time if you are by yourself or a fantastic team effort from the entire band staff if you work on a team.

So, what does that look like? Offer as many musical experiences that you can for the individual student musician and your ensembles. From the beginner to the senior you want them to have wonderful musical moments that make them feel proud, successful, accomplished, appreciated and a part of the community they represent.

Have a plan with short-term and long-term goals. Build something unique to just your program...traditions that beginners have, 8th graders do, Seniors serving in a Big Brother/Big Sister program etc. Have a focal point for each grade level. Develop leadership opportunities at all grade levels. Create variety in your daily routines...if your students are challenged and thinking in their fundamentals it takes the monotony out of routine. Bring in guests/mentors if you can...even more variety for students and staff.

Give them opportunities to perform in a variety of individual and ensemble experiences in class and concerts. Beginners to seniors should be exposed to Solo and Ensemble, District, Region, All-State auditions, Youth/Community Wind Bands and Orchestras. If you can, feature small sections or families (WW, Brass, Perc) at concerts between songs or bands. Have a private lesson program

or spend a few minutes with each student even if once a week or once a month. Use technology...a lot...this generation lives it! Play music and recordings of world class musicians, bands, orchestras and jazz ensembles. Show them EVERY summer band camp flyer that is mailed to you. Take them to concerts...MS to HS... HS to local university or community band. I like the idea of being like a great college or university program: They offer a great concert band program, marching band program, jazz program that even includes combos, percussion ensembles, winter guard, woodwind & brass choirs, mariachi program, steel drum band, chamber ensembles, full orchestra (if you do have a string program), musical pit and they perform, perform, perform.

Students and parents also appreciate a fair, logical, achievable assessment tool that is clear and allows for personal growth and development.

On top of striving for a comprehensive program you then must detail what you can and do offer. For instance, a passion for me is to offer a great jazz education for my students. So, within that genre we teach jazz vocabulary, theory, ear training, rhythmic dictation, improvisation, jazz language & symbols, articulations and ensemble skills pertaining to just jazz. We listen to jazz, show YouTube recordings of great jazz performances and have guest artists and attend jazz festivals...whew...variety!

Where do you get these seeds to plant and build a great comprehensive band program? That's where the Texas Bandmasters Association can and should have an important role in your career and impact the musical lives of your students. The excellence of Texas Bands comes from directors sharing their knowledge either at our annual clinic/convention or at our outreach programs throughout the state and school year. Every July the musical farmer in you should want to get in your car or a plane and make your way to San Antonio, Texas to pick up your new packet of seeds for the new school year. “If You Build It, They Will Come.” It is such an honor for me and my family, Jackie and Nathan Sandoval, to serve TBA and your band family. See you in July!