

Band Benefits . . . and More!

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

The following is a sound-byte from a chapter written for the “Teaching Music Through Performance in Band” series. Many have said the message has awakened parents, administrators, counselors, etc., and created a forum to discuss the importance of our band culture. Might I suggest you can cut-’n-paste any segment of the article and share it via newsletters, program notes, Facebook posts, etc. You can find the article online at texasbandmasters.org/resources/bandmasters_review.php.

There are countless reasons to “be in band.” From my narrow perspective, the number one reason is to “make music.” The intrinsic benefits of self-expression are beyond measure. Simply put: WE MAKE MUSIC TO MAKE MUSIC. This in itself *is* the reason to embrace music learning and music making. With that said, it is often difficult to explain/express the values of band (and every other aspect of school music programs) to someone who has not experienced this one-of-a-kind universal language. The only way to truly understand the priceless rewards of conveying feeling, passion, intensity, humanness via the art form of music is to be a part of it—not a bystander who “appreciates it,” but a contributing “personality” to the musical stage (even in solo fashion).

While everyone has the propensity to make music, those who have not tapped the inherent talent often look at other spin-off values that are harvested as the result of the requisite commitment and dedication to music. While I caution this is not the justification for any form of music education, the following logic can (and often does) bring the non-music-maker into the conversation. This opens the dialogue about the critical importance of music as a key aspect of the positive growth and development of each and every child.

Through music learning we teach:

- An understanding of QUALITY as well as the rewards of QUANTITY.
- Behavior based on ETHICS as well as the importance of obeying the RULES.
- Respect for AUTHORITY as opposed to fear of DOMINATION.
- A working WISDOM as well as a solid transcript of ACHIEVEMENT.
- An ongoing development of INNER PEACE as well as a workable plan for personal SECURITY.

QUALITY - QUANTITY

Our educational system is heavily focused on assessment/testing. We measure the success and/or failure of the learning process through a series of evaluations. Clearly there has to be a scale to review, benchmark, and monitor the teaching process; it’s the way we determine LEARNING. All too often, the numerical outcome becomes an end within itself and it tells us very little about the pragmatic value of the class material. Shouldn’t we be more concerned how this “subject matter” is relevant? We must ask, “Can the ‘quantitative results’ be integrated into the student’s lives to promote better living, learning, and being?”

Music, by nature, triggers both the cognitive and affective mind. Not only does the young artist experience the input of facts and figures, but he/she simultaneously

develops an appreciation for art. **We don’t make music to get to the end of the musical composition; we make music to make music.** The personal reward is not the final evaluation (as in a quantity-driven curriculum), but rather the intrinsic satisfaction generated as a result of MUSIC-MAKING. Music teaches an appreciation for QUALITY as well as an understanding of QUANTITY.

ETHICS - RULES

For the survival of mankind and the perpetuation of our communal form of living we must have RULES to ensure the welfare of the community members. For the safety of the drivers on our highways, we have speed limit RULES, and if these restrictions are not properly observed a penalty is assigned to the violator. Society protects itself with guardians (law enforcement), spokespersons (attorneys), and interpreters (judges, juries) to guarantee we live in harmony while still enjoying freedom of choice. Although altruistic, it is feasible there could be a society absent of rules if each individual believed, practiced, and lived an agreed code of ethics. In principle, the members of the group/community/BAND would be responsible for his/her behavior as it related to the welfare of the community/BAND. The responsibility for “harmony, balance, and blend”

Band Benefits . . . and More!

then falls on the shoulders of the individual rather than a policing agent. The choice for “doing what is right” is based on ethical understanding rather than the fear of admonishment.

The band culture (by design, by nature) requires each musician to behave in an ETHICAL fashion. **While there are certainly rules and regulations, the very fundamental structure of program excellence is based on the individual self-discipline contributed to achieve the group’s goals.** These are the character values we seek in every leadership role. BAND is shaping the lives of our “leaders of tomorrow” through the ethical habits they establish each day in the rehearsal setting.

AUTHORITY - DOMINATION

We often muse about “the podium” being one of the last bastions of a unilateral leadership position. Yet we know a social order cannot move forward without efficient and effective decision-making. Band members quickly learn to focus on the band director’s thoughts, instructions, and suggestions. The welfare/success of the band is (figuratively and literally) in the hands of the band director. **Unlike many organizations where a committee reviews every choice, the band world (accustomed to a fast-paced schedule of practices and performances) requires a LEADER/DIRECTOR who will make the call and move forward accordingly.** Band members do not have time to argue or discuss the band director’s choices. Quite the contrary, they have learned to embrace and support the power of the authority figure and trust the director’s decisions will be in the best interest of the group. Healthy, happy societies are not solely based on the individual opinions of the members, but rather on the mutual understanding of the importance of UNITY and the willingness to make personal sacrifices and contributions (time, effort, energy) to the agreed mission. The power base of the leader (the authority, the band director) is supported by the cooperative contributions of the followers (the band members). When the “respect for AUTHORITY” overrides the “fear of DOMINATION,” it establishes a positive

atmosphere that opens the unlimited possibilities of the group’s synergistic potential and it is virtually unlimited.

Domination, by intent, discourages creative thinking. The emphasis is on obedience (often “blind obedience”) that supports the choices of the leader. As opposed to encouraging “creative thinking,” the environment of domination dictates “*what* to think” rather than “*how* to think.” It rewards compliance (agreement and conformity) without the consideration for the welfare of the followers. Authority, on the other hand, encourages creative thinking while focusing on the importance of cooperation and the ability of the members to “agree to disagree” while still moving forward to sustain and promote the group’s agenda.

WISDOM - ACHIEVEMENT

Our educational community continues to increase the testing component as an end-all for knowledge comprehension. The subtle implication is, “If it cannot be assessed, it is not worthy of academic consideration.” Of what value is all this rigorous data-exchange if it is not applicable to the individual’s life? **Now there is research indicating we can only remember and access the information we reinforce in our daily habits. Content (information) without context (an understanding of the benefits) is a dead-end street. The value of learning is not WHAT we know, but WHAT WE CAN DO with what we know.** Memorizing a long list of anything for the mere purpose of passing the test is an exercise in memorization, nothing more. Information recall is not the key to MASTERY; being able to see the RELEVANT-VALUE of the information is the key, AND it should be the focal point of the educational process. If we are only going to credit the value of higher test scores, we’re doomed to be a world of facts and figures. Certainly the quantitative aspect of LEARNING is crucial, however should we not be concerned about the qualitative value? Isn’t this the very reason we choose to learn in the first place?

Being in the band deals with both achievement (a measurable set of disciplines and guidelines) and wisdom

Band Benefits . . . and More!

(learning that will support a positive, purposeful lifestyle). Band is one of the few areas of the school day that supports expression as well as impression. Music learning embraces all forms of cognitive learning and goes a step further by integrating the data into the human soul: EMOTION. Music reinforces the principles and ideals that have a significant and lasting effect on the way we choose to live. It teaches the ability to work with others, nourishes the love of learning, encourages cultural awareness, promotes cooperative flexibility in a communal climate, develops self-discipline, extends understanding, etc. All the while it does have standards and it can be assessed. There ARE testing evaluations that measure ACHIEVEMENT, and there IS solid testimony that evidences the WISDOM gained impacts the welfare of the learner. Simply put: band makes better human beings and makes human beings better.

INNER PEACE - SECURITY

We humans continue along the pathway of SECURING various things to promote personal happiness. Whether it is a new car, a college education, a house, a boat, a job, a title, or any other extrinsic reward. The chase (and the race) for goal attainment is threaded into every aspect of the educational docket. When and where do we come to the point of personal satisfaction, the payoff, the joy of living life, and the very reason we choose to educate ourselves in the first place? Is success measured by what

we have or who we are? Are we training students to “focus on high test scores,” or teaching students to “enjoy a life filled with personal satisfaction?” These are serious questions, for they determine the learner’s mind-maps. Is the student connected to the product (the grade at the end of the semester) or the process (the holistic experience of blending intelligence, aesthetics, and emotion)? It’s not about “just knowing the right answers.” **It’s about “using the right answers” for what they can yield as a reference to meeting the challenges of daily living.**

Every individual must determine his/her personal criteria for happiness. Nobody can (nor should) dictate what brings pleasure and joy to the human spirit. Whether dealing with short term goals or long term goals, we often become so goal-driven we ignore or simply don’t recognize the importance of enjoying the journey as we attain our given goals—the very reason for WHY WE EXIST. Band offers a new paradigm of learning. The music IS the reason, it IS the reward, it IS the substance, and it IS the payoff. The means and the extremes are one in the same. We do not play music to get to the end of it; we play it to make music. In fact if we are truly “connected to the process” we do not want the music to end, or the rehearsal to stop, or the concert to be finished. We acquire and develop a desire for expressing our inner thoughts and feelings through the music. We become artists and enjoy the highest form of personal satisfaction, CREATIVE EXPRESSION, the

“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.