

TBA-YBDT Partnership, An Immediate Success



Katie Fehr

“This is a great thing that you are doing,” the conference attendee said to the presenter. And, indeed, looking across the room as the session ended, one could see dozens of directors staying after the session to talk with new friends and to catch up with colleagues from across the state. Most of the conversations seemed informal, but connections were being made, ideas exchanged. Young Band Directors of Texas (YBDT) and, more importantly, the band directors in attendance, already were reaping the benefit of YBDT’s new partnership with the Texas Bandmasters Association.

Founded in the fall of 2017, YBDT’s mission is to reduce director burnout. Almost all members of the music profession at times feel isolated, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Studies indicate that music educators with less than seven years of experience, are most

likely to leave the profession because of these pressures. The transition from college, where one has within their reach the guidance and support of a professor or a cooperating teacher, to the “real world” where one might have individual responsibility for a band or for an entire band program, can be daunting. Thankfully, there are many, established veteran directors that are willing to lend their knowledge and expertise. YBDT’s goals are to act as a research clearinghouse and to serve as a conduit for the connection of veteran director mentors to new director mentees.

At the 2018 Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic, YBDT officers presented two clinics and held several social events. The hundreds that attended were a diverse group, representing different school classifications, different stages of

classroom experience, and different geographic regions of Texas. The first clinic, *What Does a Mentor Relationship Mean to You?*, featured a mentor-mentee panel discussion. Among the topics addressed were the benefits to both parties in the mentor-mentee relationship, long-distance mentoring, beginner pedagogy and lesson planning, and how to program for UIL and other concerts. Audience response included such questions as “Is it too late to seek out a mentor?” -from a band director in his seventh year of teaching and “How can I get involved and help?” -from an established, veteran director.

Advisory Committee members from Young Band Directors of Texas led the second clinic. Entitled *Three Essentials for Young Band Directors*, the presentation addressed the crucial topics of guidance, balance, and



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community, in resource acquisition and usage. Attendees jotted down notes as the presenters spoke on the practical and valuable topics that ranged from approaches on networking to recommendations for inexpensive, yet reliable, recording equipment. Knowing HOW to set yourself up for success seemed to be the central concern for new teachers. Respondents asked how to create a support/recourse network, how to balance career and personal life, what strategies were best for furthering professional development, and how to differentiate between reliable and unreliable resources.

TBA conference attendees responded positively to the sessions. One, Vincent Morris, had high praise for the organization: “YBDT’s first TBA convention went amazing! It provided young directors tools on how to be a better educator, but more importantly they have an opportunity to connect with directors from around the state who are in similar situations. They helped provide a voice that says ‘you are not alone.’ The clinic *Three Essentials of a Young Band Director* was extremely helpful, engaging and needed. It has propelled me to balance my life and remind me that I am a human and can do things other than band! Thankful for this group of people!”

Moving forward, Young Band Directors of Texas plans to transition from the designation of organization “followers” to organization “members” on FaceBook and Instagram. Directors should be able to register as members by October 2018. Additionally, YBDT is seeking applications for regional chairs in all geographical areas of Texas. The establishment of regional chairs will enable YBDT to further its stated mission by providing members with a support community in their area. Great things are happening with YBDT. Stay tuned for more to come, and message us about getting involved! And, again, thank you, Texas Bandmasters Association! We are looking forward to next year’s convention!

Katie Fehr is an assistant band director at Frenship High School in Wolfforth, TX. Ms. Fehr is a first year teacher and directs the Freshmen Band and assists with all other performing ensembles at the high school. She also assists the feeder middle school band programs with their beginner classes and advanced band rehearsals. Prior to beginning her teacher career, Ms. Fehr received her Bachelor’s in Music Education at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX and is currently pursuing a Master’s in Music Education. She student taught at Ronald Reagan High School and Barbara Bush Middle School in San Antonio, TX. Through the creation of YBDT, Ms. Fehr hopes to provide valuable resources and a sense of community for new band directors.