

Infusing Student Leadership Development Year-round: It's all about the follow up!

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What if you could have more student-initiated leadership in your band program throughout the year? Rather than just selecting a few student leaders before marching band, imagine what your program might look like if you could infuse leadership development (and followership development) throughout all your ensembles?

You certainly can grow, develop, and encourage more students to make things happen—whether they have a leadership title or not—all year long. With some simple strategic planning on your part, there are many moments on your band's calendar when *preparing the students AND following up with the students* increases opportunities to develop more leadership beyond the marching band season.

WARNING! There are three reasons NONE of this will work for you! While John Medina would remind us “everyone's brain is wired differently,” we're all creatures of habit. Sometimes those old habits get in the way of creating new habits. Check out Destin Sandlin's “Backwards Bicycle” video at <https://youtu.be/MFzDaBzBIL0> and you'll understand why we sometimes say it's “**too hard to change!**” While you're there on YouTube, watch <https://youtu.be/Y7XW-mewUm8> which illustrates the second reason you might NOT do any of this: because I'm “**too busy to change!**” After all, developing student leadership sometimes seems like herding cats <https://youtu.be/Pk7yqlTMvp8> which might be the third reason NOT to do this: because I'm “**too tired to change!**”

During our presentation at the 2018 TBA Convention/Clinic, directors played a micro-lesson on how to be positive and constructive vs. negative and critical. Doing short, simple, pragmatic exercises like this prepares students on how to interact, communicate, and help each other. After brainstorming ideas and prioritizing those ideas during the clinic session, the directors shared these ideas:

1. Before starting small ensembles in April, meet with the ensemble leaders to talk about effective rehearsal strategies and how to work with people and communicate effectively.

2. As soon as school starts, assign leadership roles to as many of my middle school band students as possible and practical so students take more ownership.

3. Mentally prepare 7th-graders turning into 8th-graders to be leaders directly following UIL. Let them know that they will be the new helm of the ship for our future.

4. Once per quarter, work with and model for middle school section leaders one-on-one as well as in small sectionals so that they can see effective ways to teach and share with their peers.

5. In December - January, develop chamber groups with coaching sessions using upper classmen, or area college students, so they can experience first-hand an example of “how to do small ensemble work.”

6. Create a one-day or weekend-long Leadership Camp before solo/ensemble time to teach students how to rehearse as a group. Teach students how to use a metronome in small ensemble rehearsal. Also teach a framework for how those rehearsals can be structured.

7. Utilizing a Paris Conservatory-style masterclass, give solo and ensemble performance opportunities with students providing feedback to their peers. Coach students on listening to and reacting to performances—including concert etiquette as audience members.

8. Utilize 8th-grade students and high school students to assist the 7th-grade students in the all-region etude preparation process starting in September.

9. Train some trusted students how to input data and take care of other administrative duties by the third week of classes.

10. In late-April, have high school students teach 7th- and 8th-grade students about marching, so they are not scared to join marching band in the future.

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11. Teach high school students how to run private lessons for middle school students starting in October and November.

Notice the trend contained within all these ideas as they relate to better **preparing students** to lead and follow.

We also know what Marshall Goldsmith would remind us: **follow-up contact is key to reinforcing leadership development**. While he works with adults in companies, his findings have implications for students in bands. Strong correlations exist between the degree of follow-up and any perceived change in leadership effectiveness.

“Continual contact with colleagues regarding development issues is so effective it can succeed even without a large, formal program. The key to changing behavior is “learning to learn” from those around us, and then modifying our behavior on the basis of their suggestions. If the organization can teach the leader to reach out to co-workers, to listen and learn, and to focus on continuous development, both the leader and the organization will benefit. After all, by following up with colleagues, a leader demonstrates a commitment to self-improvement—and a determination to get better. This process does not have to take a lot of time or money. There’s something far more valuable: contact.”

What if you video recorded a short one-on-one teaching moment and provided feedback to your students? What if you could track rehearsal time vs. sectional time vs. one-on-one private lesson time? How could you coach students to help memorize music with follow-up accountability check-offs? https://youtu.be/aOFarL_pyzY

You get the idea. Prepare your students to lead better and follow better all year long then follow up, follow up, follow up.

References

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Goldsmith, M., Morgan, H. (2004) “Leadership is a contact sport: The ‘follow-up factor’ in management development.” *Strategy+Business*, Issue 36. New York: Booz & Co. <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/04307>

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Outside the music education world, he works with schools, associations, conventions and corporate organizations who are actively engaged in teaching and reaching today’s kids. Fran speaks at many state, regional and national conferences about What Makes Kids KICK and how they can KICK IT IN & TAKE THE LEAD. He has his B.A. in Music Education and a M.A. in Educational Psychology. His involvement with TBA has been graciously sponsored in part by Drum Corps International and Music for All.

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