

Making an Eternal Impact on Your Students

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On behalf of my extraordinary band directing wife, Jenna, and our two sons, Noah and Ashton, please accept our family's thanks in advance for the opportunity to serve Texas band directors and students through our membership on the Texas Bandmasters Association Board of Directors. Over the course of the next several years, we will invest our full efforts to honor the incredible opportunity we've been given.

In 1993, I began 6th grade band on the trumpet at Doerre Middle School in Klein, Texas. The soft-spoken young man who entered that band hall had very few friends, little to no confidence, and poor self-esteem. My middle school years were full of teasing, taunting, and academic struggles *outside the band hall*. Yet *inside* Susan Scarborough's band hall, I was given a voice. I was given a family. I was given a safe place to learn how to express myself, push myself, and unlock aspects of my personality I didn't know existed.

It continued throughout high school as I transitioned into the Klein High School Band under the direction of Mr. Randy Vaughn. Between the years of 1996 and 2000, Randy and his staff provided an engaging and dynamic musical environment in which I was able to discover what would become my life's dream... to become a band director. I wanted to provide students with the very same experiences that I was so fortunate to receive when I needed them most.

I frequently ask myself what made these band programs feel like families. What made them feel safe? What about them encouraged me to leave my comfort zone and push myself to grow and expand in the ways I did?

I believe one of the biggest reasons why, was that both band halls were filled with *directors who viewed their students as people first*. They developed me as a person first, musician second. When we develop our students as people, they become fantastic musicians along the way. The music will always take care of itself if we develop people first.

In addition, *my directors were genuine*. Young people have the incredible ability to see straight through teachers who put up walls... teachers who try to be someone they are not. When we are vulnerable enough to be our true selves in our classrooms, our students see that. They feel that. They respond by doing the very same.

Lastly, *my directors were positive*. They affected change through encouragement, motivation, building us up, and seeing the best in us. Yelling, berating, and hurtful sarcasm weren't a part of their vocabulary. They didn't teach us to avoid mistakes or perform with fear. When we see the best in our students and coach them to aggressively pursue excellence, they create beautiful music.

How did my directors know to do these things? I believe they knew to do them because their teachers showed them. That's how this works. Masterful teaching is passed down through generations. It's our job to keep our eyes and ears open, study those who have gone before us, lock arms with others doing the same, and then turn around and influence the next generation through our own teaching. If we're lucky, we'll have a handful of students who turn around and pass it along themselves.

To quote my older brother and Leander ISD band parent, "What you [band directors] do is eternal." —Peter Yee

So, as you find yourself sitting in professional development sessions while the emails pile up and the school year schedule quickly replaces your slow summer days, work to remind yourself of the masterful teaching that likely brought you into our profession. Remember that it's your job to turn around and pass it to the next generation so they can do the same. ***Know that your impact is eternal.***

And when the school year comes to an end, rest with your family and friends and we'll see you at the 2020 Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic! There's no better place to connect with those who have masterfully gone before us, learn from them, and turn around to pass it along.