

Is Everyone Replaceable?

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

We've heard it time-and-time again, "Everyone is replaceable!" Really? You can replace a POSITION, but can you replace a PERSON(ality)?

If there was ever a profession where THE PERSON overshadowed THE POSITION, we could easily point to band directing as the best example to challenge the aforementioned adage. The vast majority of the people reading this article are doing so because of a mentor, a teacher, a band director...a PERSON! (There certainly are exceptions, but—by definition—that's WHY they are exceptions in the first place.)

My guess is, Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr./Professor Whomever had a profound influence on your life, to the point you chose to pursue band directing as your vocational highway. In many cases the trust relationship that was created and nurtured has continued long after middle school, high school, college and throughout your teaching career (and even retirement!) Is that person replaceable? I think not.

It's always so interesting to hear the heroes/icons in our band world talk about their own influential band directors. They will reminisce about Mrs. Smith or Dr. Jones; rarely do they identify him/her by first name. There is a sense of sacred honor about the student-mentor relationship that prevents the casualness of addressing the teacher as: Sarah, Bill, Stan, Betsy, etc. It just wouldn't feel right; in fact, it would borderline on inappropriate. No doubt we all have had our music mentors make the following request: "Please, we're now colleagues. Call me by my first name." After a few

awkward tries, we abandoned the effort and choose to return to the familiar title showing our respect and appreciation to them for being who they are and the vital role they play(ed) in our lives. Are these people replaceable? I think not.

Personal story: After graduating from college, the excitement of finally and officially being a band director was absolutely beyond measure. Not only did I want to fulfill (and exceed) the expectations of all those who "took a chance" on "a rookie teacher," but it was equally as important to not disappoint my mentor. The first convention time together I had with him (now as colleagues), I said, "Mr. Dunn, would you..." He interrupted me, "Timmer, we're fellow band directors, please call me Earl." WHAT?! Was I dreaming? As he patiently waited for me to utter his first name, I found myself in shock, confused, unknowing, taken aback, speechless, and—quite honestly—hesitant to comply to his request. Finally, I mustered up the courage to challenge and disobey my hero-teacher, "Mr. Dunn, I always want you to be my mentor; it far overshadows anything else in our relationship. I want to be able to call you for advice, share my successes and ask for help where I stub my toe. I'm sorry sir, but you will always be MR. DUNN to me." And he is...and he will be forever. Is he replaceable? Absolutely NOT!

As we all (students, directors, parents, administrators) sail these uncharted waters during this indescribable time in history, our students are desperately seeking

a lifeline of security. They want someone they know they can count on to provide a safe, challenging, and encouraging "culture of excellence"—a place where they can survive and thrive, where they feel secure in knowing their positive welfare is at the forefront of the mission at hand. Might I suggest, for many of these young hearts-'n-minds, the place is the BAND HALL and the BAND FAMILY is there to provide support and love to reassure everyone. WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER. One for all, and all for one. Who is that someone who will lead them through these turbulent times? It's YOU, their band director, someone who is NOT replaceable.

If there was ever a time our young performers need a leader who will be there for them (regardless how this pandemic plays out), it is NOW. While all educators have the opportunity to shepherd their own students to more favorable learning landscapes, the band director stands solidly at the top of the list as "the chosen one" for so many. The one who is NOT replaceable.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

Following his tenure in the college band directing world, Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc. to manage the many requests for teacher inservice workshops, student leadership seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of effective leadership training. Dr. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc. He is a nationally recognized voice touting the importance of arts education for every child. His books, produced by G.I.A. Publications, Inc., continue to be bestsellers in the educational community. Tim is also the Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All, and NAMM (The National Association of Music Merchants). He continues to teach as an adjunct faculty member at Ball State University, Indiana-Purdue/Ft. Wayne University, and Butler University. He is also a member of the Midwest Clinic Board of Directors and the Western International Band Clinic/American Band College Board of Directors.