



**TBA
Statement on
Racism**

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The Texas Bandmasters Association denounces the ongoing violence and racism against the Black community. We are saddened by the recent deaths and events in our country and are committed to inclusion and equity. Music is, and has always been, a way to unite people. We stand beside our other state and national music education associations in our commitment to listening and learning how we can better assist our members as they work to shape the lives of their students. Music education offers the opportunity to build a community of inclusion. Through education we believe change can happen.

The Power of Inclusion

Jager Loyde

I'm sure everyone remembers a time when teams needed to be picked at recess—maybe for just a fun game of dodgeball. Well, there was always someone chosen last and we usually knew who it would be before the choosing began. Remember that feeling? That silent understanding we all felt was the seed of exclusion. Whether it be for skills or something completely unrelated, most of us have a tendency to unconsciously guard ourselves from what we perceive to be different or unfamiliar. This is natural, but not ideal.

When we are building our band programs, who is our program for, ideally? Who are we choosing *last*?" These questions are rarely asked, but are indoctrinated into our educational practice. From everyday instruction to the composers, artists, and contests we choose to expose to our students, we are constantly sending messages about who and what we value.

Inclusion - A Word Among Many Other Words

One of the things I've been noticing lately is how many words are being used interchangeably or out of context? Some of these words you may have heard before (equity, diversity, etc.) and may be used when discussing challenges in your school or program. Inclusion is one of those words, but *practicing* inclusion isn't as simple as just choosing different students; it's a multi-faceted ideal that starts with your belief that *everyone* should be included, and that efficacy permeates throughout your program. Inclusion requires practice. Here are a few ways to improve **student engagement**, **retention**, and **voice** through the use of inclusive practices:

Instruction

I always feel like it's most practical to start with something that someone could implement tomorrow. Instruction is one area where inclusive work is the most effective as it directly affects the student. Think of instruction in four vignettes where levels of inclusion can be observed:

1. Attention - Who do you pay attention to most in a regular classroom setting? Does that change when it is virtual? The easiest way to validate and truly understand where your time and attention is spent is to record your class and rewatch it objectively. Try to listen less to the sounds students are making and more to what you said (or didn't say) and how it impacted their response (musical or not). Notice if any unconscious biases towards gender, race, talent, or otherwise become evident to you when reviewing the recording. If you are seeing an unequal balance in treatment, this may be a sign that you need to be more mindful of your instructional engagement. You may be likely to lose students because of something as simple as not calling on them and having them interpret that as you not valuing them as a band member.

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2. Verbiage - Words and names are important. Do you spell and pronounce all of your students' names correctly? Do you find it hard to say "good work" or compliment some students unless they did an exceptional job "for them"? I know all of my past teachers couldn't say that about me, and some would argue that my name is pronounced and spelled differently than seen or heard from my own mouth. It matters because it shows basic human respect and affirms a student's social capital in the classroom. Just like *Cheers*, we want our band halls to be a place where "Everybody knows your name". Take the time to use inclusive language and questioning, vary response mediums for students to encourage participation, and say and spell student names correctly. It really matters.

3. Literature - Does your concert or marching music identify with your students? Can they connect in any way or are you just feeding them what you were fed as a student? The world is huge and I'm sure the students are asking us why we aren't acknowledging it musically at times. This isn't to say down with *Lincolnshire Posy* and other pieces of like quality, but can we talk about Grainger and Grimes in the same instructional period? What do your students connect with in your literature? When it comes to ensemble achievement, we tend to choose repertoire based on ensemble strengths, continuing to hide the 3rd trumpet and clarinet sections. This only works to our deficit because we are not allowing opportunities for these students to show their growth, daily. How is your music program allowing every student to shine?

4. Ensemble Structure - Now, probably more than ever, the delineation between ensembles should be fairly non-existent. Students should have a rich musical experience in every band class—not just the top ensemble. How does

your class structure promote an inclusive environment for your entire program? Ability-based ensembles may work toward our musical achievement, but our cultural development can be upended if we are not intentional in engaging all students in the program.

If we want to be inclusive, we must hold ourselves accountable to serving all the students in our community — not just the demographic majority. This is important, because demographics are ever changing, which means you should be responsive to those shifts. Inclusion is paramount in creating a future of diverse educators in our evolving industry.

Culture

Inclusion in my classroom was never about making everyone an All Stater. Though this would be an awesome feat, I'm convinced that students would like to be valued for who they are and improving upon who they are is our job. We can really affect a student's

experience before we even teach them a note or rhythm. Here are some areas where inclusion could be in question and may deserve a closer look:

1. Leadership Structure - How do I become a leader in your program? Beyond academic eligibility, are there any other barriers that would disqualify students that could benefit from a "leadership" position? When you choose leaders in your programs, you have to be aware of how students interact with these decisions. Earlier, I spoke about messages we send: who we place in prominent positions can be a key factor in how accessible your program appears to your community and future members. Basically, if for the last few years you've chosen the same "type of kid" to be a drum major or president, more than likely your students have self-identified their level of contribution based on a pattern or trend they perceive. If

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this thinking seems wild to you, a practical example would be what we witness in the world with traditional roles. White rappers may have caused an eyebrow raise or two in the 90s, but Vanilla Ice would've crushed it in the 2010s right? We've got to keep evolving and learning from real world examples and realize that talent has no ethnicity.

2. Handbook - Are your rules, expectations, or program requirements creating an exclusive atmosphere? This can be an easily forgotten document that we loosely abide by, seldom read or refer to. Yet, it is an extremely important document because it outlines the policies and guidelines that run your program. It may need to be amended from time to time, but that doesn't always have to be because something unfortunate happened, but rather in response to the needs of your students. Once you know better, you've got to show better in your processes. For example, many of us haven't looked at our uniform policies in a while, but I'm sure there are plenty of gender specific descriptions. Not that this is actively excluding students on a daily basis, but as a public document, it may speak to what you have or have not experienced in the program. From an instructional perspective, do you require students in the top ensemble to take private lessons? Probably a little financially prohibitive for some. If these notions seem simple or "not in your program", it's still a good idea to regularly review policies that require responsibility on the part of the student and determine if every student will need equal effort to meet the expectation.

3. Community Accessibility - How many languages are spoken in your program? Can you or your staff speak any other languages? Especially in Texas schools, it's incredibly important to utilize translation software to ensure your communications are understood. Technology could be considered as yet another language to emphasize and be fluent in. If your program does not have a digital presence of any kind, it's likely that you're not serving your community in its entirety. What about your parent or booster organization? How well represented do you think your students are on the board or in your volunteers? Doubling down on your efforts to include and engage marginalized groups will reap benefits. Sometimes the fear may be having to choose or getting a group to be involved. If there's a unified vision for the program, this should not be an issue. Take charge of making sure that the vision of your program is known throughout the community by being open to your community (parents, students, surrounding businesses). When the community knows your vision of success and that they can play a role in that success, more things are possible.

If there's anything I can say for sure, it's that we all have experienced growth, change, and challenge these past months. This is the same for our students as they navigate this educational environment and idealize their futures. Social issues have taken on a more predominant role in education, society, and our own lives. These issues affect our students and ultimately our programs when we do not address them as part of the student's overall educational experience. What will you address tomorrow?

Mr. Nolan Jager Loyde received his Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of North Texas and his Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Stephen F. Austin State University. Mr. Loyde currently serves as the Assistant Director of Fine Arts over Instrumental Music in Round Rock ISD in the Austin, Texas area. Mr. Loyde previously served as Director of Bands for Cedar Ridge High School in Round Rock ISD.

Throughout his educational career, concert bands and orchestras under Mr. Loyde's direction have received consistent superior ratings at UIL Concert and Sight Reading Evaluations. Complimentary to these achievements, the Sudler Shield nominated marching band programs under his direction have been consistently successful in various marching festivals including Bands of America and UIL Region, Area, and State Competitions.

Prior to serving as an administrator, Mr. Loyde was an active performer and educator across the United States where he received various honors and the opportunity to perform alongside many world class musicians. Mr. Loyde continues his professional impact by serving as a frequent adjudicator and clinician at the state and national levels. Most recently, he has been selected as a staff member for the Bands of America Honor Band in the 2021 Rose Parade and selected as a Quarter-Finalist for the GRAMMY Music Educator Award in 2019