

Connections!

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CONNECTIONS! What a simple yet incredibly important topic for RIGHT NOW. My inspiration for this article's topic comes from the 2021 TMEA Convention theme: **MUSICconnects**. As we have all faced so many challenges this past year, I hope this article will provide some much-needed positivity and inspiration for you.

I began writing this article shortly after the conclusion of the TMEA Convention. I really enjoyed the overarching theme that *Music is what connects us all*. These connections provide so many positive elements that affect us personally and professionally. Here are a few CONNECTIONS that we can focus on for inspiration and motivation:

Connect with your Students:

So many of us have struggled to maintain and make new connections with our students through a computer screen over the past year. I know some of you are fortunate enough to have "in person" classes and rehearsals; however, there are many of you that have students remaining mostly virtual.

The social/emotional well-being of both YOU and your STUDENTS is so important!! Taking the time to make EVERY student feel important helps strengthen that connection. Music, and specifically Band, provides such a unique opportunity to provide something for your students that they may not be getting during the rest of their school day. YOU can be the ONE THING that brings a spark of joy through your intentional investment in a student whether that is virtually

or face to face. It's a WIN-WIN for you and your students!

Connect with your Colleagues:

One of the great things that has come out of this past year is that everyone has become savvy with virtual meetings. Until March of 2020, I had never hosted or been on a Zoom or WebEx meeting. This technology allows you to reach out and connect all over the world!

Take time to reach out and collaborate with colleagues. If you are by yourself at your campus, use these virtual tools to connect with your feeder pattern, fellow directors in your District/Region, and reach out to others across the state and nation. Making new connections will help bolster and recharge your batteries. Attending conferences like the TBA Convention/Clinic will also help to strengthen current connections and allow you to make new ones! For those of you who have multiple directors at a campus, make sure to strengthen your connections as a staff. Your students can tell if the staff connection is strong or weak...and the students will be a MIRROR of that connection.

Connect with your Community:

As you know, your Band Program has the potential to be a beacon of light in your community. Look for opportunities to provide connection through music for your immediate school community. If you have students in person, find ways to

put on impromptu performances around the school such as small ensembles or solo performances during lunch as well as before and/or after school. As many of us know, producing small virtual performances can also provide some much-needed music outreach as well.

Keeping your program's "brand" and relevance with these community connections will help build morale with your current students AND help foster more interest for NEW MEMBERS!

Connect with your Family:

Last, but most importantly, stay connected with your family. This is your personal support network. Maintaining a good work/life balance is so important especially during times of challenge or stress. It is so easy for us as band directors to devote so much toward our program and our students. Just don't forget about your personal support network!

In closing, I hope this article helps remind you of how awesome and unique band is in our lives and in our communities. The special bond we all share through music, band, and TBA has the potential to overcome all adversity and provide that important CONNECTION for everyone.

