

# The Journey That Matters

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**“Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home.”**

—Matsuo Basho

Although band directors are music educators and *human educators*; at our core, we are musicians and *artists*. What does any artist do? An artist produces artwork...in our case a performance, a concert, or a recording. So, it comes as no surprise that it is easy for us to become very focused on that destination, final performance, or “last run” and lose sight of what truly matters. I would like to humbly suggest what truly matters are the relationships to the people with whom we travel to that performance, the lessons learned along the way, and the day-to-day we create for one another.

This is not to say that striving for that “best run” is not a worthy goal or that external validation in the form of ratings can often be a powerful and vital means of bringing much needed attention to our programs within the public school system. Rather, the end goal should simply bring more meaning and purpose to what we should be focusing on above all—the student experience.

I regularly ask myself three questions to protect both my students’ and my journey to that final performance:

- Am I making **daily efforts** to build meaningful and positive relationships with my students?
- Are we **enjoying** our time together?
- Outside of the instrument and music, what are my students learning of **eternal value**?

It should most certainly not be a party in our band halls each and every day. Productive rehearsals are often arduous, uncomfortable, and exhausting. How we internally define the daily grind may be the secret to creating an enjoyable journey to our final destination, whatever it may be.

The next time we tune the final chord of our march for the 15th time, perhaps we remind ourselves we have the honor of teaching the next generation how important it is to be a good listener.

The next time our student drops their tuner on the floor, perhaps we allow smiles to spread across our faces and work toward filling our hearts with gratitude for the teachable moment in regard to taking care of valuable belongings.

The next time we find ourselves driving to the band hall long before sunrise, perhaps we take pride in the fact that there is no more important work to be done in our society than to educate the next generation and empower them to shape a better future for all of us.

Slowly training ourselves to embrace the daily grind and fall in love with our day-to-day may even be the secret to a much larger quest we find ourselves on...**the search for sustainability.**

I am in an endless pursuit of these ideas yet stumble daily. It is good for us to remember that years from now, our students will likely not remember if rehearsal letter Q was vertically aligned. What they *will* remember is how they felt when they were in our band halls.

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**“It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.”**

—Ernest Hemingway

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