

Measuring Success

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The “why we do what we do” narrative in music education frequently begins with our personal story of impact and influence by our own mentors and directors. We reflect upon the character-building experiences of our youth, which are often connected to challenging circumstances, episodes of self-realization, and the discovery that each of us has the unlimited power to shape the entire course of our lives - and the lives of others - through our daily words and actions.

Remember that special section leader that never gave up on us when we thought we couldn't possibly keep our feet in time while playing upbeat at 152 BPM?

How about that day in 7th grade that a middle school director pulled us aside and told us they believed we could better fulfill our potential through improved listening skills and thoughtful individual practice?

Who could forget the heartfelt words of sincere pride and encouragement from a high school director the year the band missed advancing to finals by one placement?

Very rarely do we reflect upon our most formative program experiences as being associated with externally applied measurables such as the number of students that made the region band, the grade level of pieces performed at UIL, or marching band contest recaps. Our core memories are more often reflective tokens

associated with individual points of accountability and moments that helped establish or solidify our sense of belonging and importance to the organization.

Competitive outcomes that typically pervade local press-releases and social media posts do not reflect the truly meaningful achievements and successes that take place within most organizations *on a daily basis*. Remarkable directors consistently provide program experiences and uphold expectations that invariably result in student growth and positive outcome. These daily successes occur all around us and are most worthy of our acknowledgement and recognition!

Consider the potential sense of accomplishment and purpose (remembering our “why”) that might guide our endeavors if we were to intentionally take a mental inventory of these daily successes during our commute home or while walking the dog, enjoying a cup of coffee, etc. Each of us has an ability to replace negatively charged bits of baggage with joyful nuggets of self-satisfaction in recognition of everyday victories that illuminate the career pathways of master educators.

Consider fostering an environment that highlights and rewards student *behaviors* that, through repetition, result in improved cultural standards for the organization and stronger skills and character traits within its members: healthful habits, timely attendance,

demonstrated respect for self and others, attentive listening, directed response to feedback, intentional practice, hustle, enthusiasm, and kindness.

Consider measuring progress and success within longer “phrases” instead of “beats”. Identifiable outcomes in program culture, foundational skill sets, and engagement levels become clearer over time and are typically achieved by virtue of *sustained commitment and consistency from program leaders*.

One of our responsibilities as stewards of this great profession is to share our passion for teaching with students whose skills and personal characteristics make them standout prospects as future music educators. When we found our “why” upon the principle that every student can demonstrate excellence and experience success every day, the next generation of Texas directors learn to embrace and uphold the very essence of our mighty vocation.

The “Best Band in the Land” is the one we have the privilege of serving every day. When program leaders pursue excellence within a framework of internally defined, principle-centered assessment mechanisms, every member, program, and director has the opportunity to be successful.