

# **Developing Successful Band Programs in Disadvantaged Areas**

## **The La Joya High School Band Program Ruben Adame – Director of Bands**

**OVERVIEW:** The La Joya ISD has 1 High School Campus divided into 1 Junior/Senior High School and 2 Freshman/Sophomore High Schools, 5 Middle Schools (grades 6-8), and 14 elementary schools. The total district population is 50,000 and growing.

La Joya High School has a total population of 5500 students. The band program consists of 285 band students and 50 color guard students.

### **BUDGET**

#### **1. Unique considerations**

- a. Each campus is supplied with a budget for the school year. The Director of Bands for the district oversees the budget. Each budget has monies for professional services, instrument repairs, charter bus rental, dry cleaning, general supplies, employee travel, student travel, awards, fixed assets (capital outlay).
- b. Capital outlay is a set "equal" amount for each of the 5 middle schools (\$7000) and each high school (\$12,000).
- c. Entry fees for all UIL and TMEA events are paid through the students travel budget.
- d. Use of school busses is paid by the Director of Fine Arts budget.

#### **2. Compromises & challenges**

- a. Instrument quality for quantity. Many of our students at the middle school level share instruments.
- b. Many of our students can't afford to buy an instrument. In many cases the district will provide an instrument for any student in need.
- c. Limited amount of monies available for recording equipment at the Middle School and the High School.
- d. Our band parent organization plays a limited role in our band program.
- e. All of our middle schools are always competing with TAKS remedial classes.
- f. Working in a 1 High School concept creates a transportation problem for many of our students (after school rehearsals).

## **PERSONNEL**

1. High School has 8 full time directors for 285 students.
  - a. We have 3 brass specialists, 3 woodwind specialists, and 2 percussion specialists.
  - b. We have 3 competing bands and 1 non-performing band.
2. Middle Schools have 2 full time directors; this is for 225 band member programs.
3. Private lessons: No funding. The band staff is responsible for their own private and group lessons.
4. Vertical Alignment: Scheduling has made this impossible since we expanded to more than 2 middle schools. Currently, the High school staff meets with the beginner classes in the afternoon and they do not meet with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes. However, this years schedule will allow time for the high school staff to meet with the majority of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade band classes.
5. Special considerations in selecting personnel to work in our area:
  - a. Very time demanding schedule due to the lack of private lesson staff.
  - b. 12-14 hour days very normal *throughout* the year.
  - c. This kind of dedication is mandatory to provide a strong program for the students in our community.
  - d. Parental involvement in our entire district is very poor.
  - e. Travel time for our high school staff from middle school to middle school is higher than normal.
  - f. School transportation is needed for every after school event.

## **STUDENT POPULATION**

1. 90 % of our students come from "low income" homes.
2. The influence of gangs is minimal on the campus (they still exist).
3. Student population is 98% Hispanic
4. There are approximately 30% - 40% of the band students who come from poverty level homes.
5. 90% of our students can't afford to buy or rent an instrument. Many of these students can't even pay for their own band supplies.
6. 20% of our band students are migrants.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

1. Parent Volunteer Organization
  - a. The organization is very weak.
  - b. Typically, we will have 10-15 parents that are willing devote their spare time to the band program.
2. General Parental Participation
  - g. We will have 350 in attendance at our concerts.
  - h. Normal mix of proactive and inactive parents.
  - c. Our parental support is generally very good.

## **SCHEDULING**

1. We are on an 8 period day with some blocked classes mixed in.
  - a. We have 2 full band periods with the Concert band and the JV band split up into 4 different periods.
2. Marching band rehearsal takes place after school.
3. The Concert Band will meet after school during concert season.
4. All middle schools have their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade bands in the morning and the beginner classes in the afternoon. The conflicts occur with the morning classes at the middle schools and the morning classes at the high school.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

1. Campus eligibility rate 80%
2. Band program eligibility rate 95%
  - a. Must provide peer tutoring to ensure eligibility.
  - b. Must sacrifice class time for "study hall" or "make up work".
  - c. Must monitor student's progress every 3 weeks.
  - d. Must ensure students are receiving help.
  - e. Must allow students to attend tutoring classes after school.

## **RECRUITING 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TO 9TH**

1. 9<sup>TH</sup> Grade retention is the responsibility of the High School Director
2. Activities to aid in recruiting
  - a. Football season
    - i. We have selected 8<sup>th</sup> graders from each middle school "sit in" with the high school band for home games.
    - ii. We have 2 middle school band nights during football season
  - b. Concert Season
    - i. We will have a recruiting concert for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade Fine Arts students at the La Joya ISD Performing Arts Center
4. Auditions (This has worked for us)
  - a. Not necessary for 8<sup>th</sup> graders
  - b. during marching season just assign parts based on MS director recommendations
  - c. Chair placing is based on All Region results (Wind Ensemble)
  - d. Chair placing in other bands are done by auditions
5. Summer Band
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> session only for everybody. We rehearse marching fundamentals inside the high school gym. This is a good opportunity for team bonding. (3 days from 9am-12pm)
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> session is 1 ½ weeks. We begin outside from 8:30am – 11:00am (marching fundamentals and drill), 11:00am – 12:00pm (indoor sectionals), 1:00pm – 2:00pm (indoor sectionals), 2:00pm – 3:00pm (full band).
  - c. At the conclusion of summer band we have a swimming party and an awards ceremony.



## **Developing Successful Band Programs in Disadvantaged Areas**

### **THE HANNA HIGH SCHOOL BAND PROGRAM Brownsville, Texas**

**OVERVIEW:** The Brownsville ISD has five High schools (three 5A, two 4A), nine Middle schools, thirty-two elementary schools and a total student population of approximately 43,000 students.

Hanna has Student population of approx. 2,600. The Band program has 250 members.

#### **BUDGET**

##### **1. Unique considerations**

- a. Large district, we are given a lump sum for supplies, equipment, drill writers, all music & arrangers, guard equipment, guard instructors etc. Our magic fund. \$6,000 a year for each High School. (\$4,000 for the upcoming year)
- b. Capital outlay is a set "equal" amount for each of the 5 HS & 9 MS. \$14,000 a year for each High School. (\$0.00 for the upcoming year)
- c. Our entry fees, transportation (UIL & TMEA events only) come out of a centralized fine arts budget. I am told we consume the following in an average year: \$35,000 Transportation, \$5,000 entry fees and meals.
- d. Instrument repair. A single district instrument repairman who is set up in one of the High School's band hall does all repairs.
- e. Boosters: Have concessions at football games. In our case other major sources are a golf tournament, sponsorships (pictures), homecoming mums.
- f. Equipment buses, our district has converted several outdated buses as instrument/equipment buses. Our transportation director got the idea from Corpus Christi schools. This has saved money on U-haul rental and freed up instructional staff. The buses are billed at a much lower rate than a school bus is.

##### **2. Compromises & challenges**

- a. Instrument quality for quantity.
- b. Little or no recording equipment purchases.
- c. Little or no expansion of the music library.
- d. Uniforms are very basic, no concert tuxedos, no ponchos, (we use trash bags). Uniforms are on a 10 year replacement cycle.
- e. All guard equipment is borrowed or made by the band staff.
- f. No Auditorium on campus, there is a gym and a cafeteria available. (a performance venues is available at our local UT campus for \$1500 a day)
- g. All trips or festival performances must be funded entirely by the Boosters.

- h. Must use everything well past normal service lives, i.e. 1964 Contra Clarinet still in use with the top group.
- i. No funding for State Solo and Ensemble contest. (we can't afford it)
- j. If we can afford it; we borrow it, make it, or do without and work around it.
- k. Explosive growth, the program has more than doubled in size of the last 5 years with no change in funding.
- l. Meals on away UIL/TMEA events usually HFB deli sandwiches, chips and a soft drink. This keeps it under \$2.00 a student.
- m. No money for conventions or dues. (only designated Chaperone at the district set rates)

### PERSONNEL

- 1. High School has 4 full time directors for 250 students.
  - a. We have a Brass specialist, a Percussion specialist, and 2 woodwind instructors. One of the Woodwind instructors also handles the guard.
  - b. We have 4 performing and competing bands each director has a group.
- 2. \*\*Middle Schools have 3 or 4 full time directors; this is for 300+ member CCC programs. Our feeders, Oliveira & Vela Middle School have strong programs and this is what makes our High School program work.
- 3. We have a double reeds specialist who floats to 2 High Schools and 4 Middle schools.
- 4. Private lessons: No funding. The band staff gives all individual lessons.
- 5. Vertical Alignment: Scheduling has made this impossible the last 2 years. Prior to that the High School staff was at the middle school during the top bands rehearsal 4 days a week.
- 6. Special considerations in selecting personnel to work in our area:
  - a. Very time demanding schedule due to the lack of private lesson staff.
  - b. 14 hour days very normal *throughout* the year.
  - c. This kind of dedication is mandatory to provide a strong program for the students in our community.

### STUDENT POPULATION

- 1. In a city of 145,000 and five high schools our zone has the largest percentage of students from "middle income" homes.
- 2. The influence of gangs is minimal on the campus
- 3. Student population is 96% Hispanic
- 4. There are approximately 15-20% of the band students who come from poverty level homes.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

### **1. Band Boosters**

- a. The booster organization is relatively strong for our area.
- b. We have a strong Band Booster board of directors.
- c. There will be 40-50 band parent couples that will help out when it is needed.
- d. Our board is comprised of both current band parents *and* past band parents. (one board couple has been on the board for 24 years)

### **2. General Parental Participation**

- d. We will have 300+ in attendance at our concerts
- e. Normal mix of proactive and inactive parents
- c. I would characterize the parental support as good.

## **SCHEDULING**

1. We are still on accelerated Block with a 4 period day.
2. Students are group (in theory) by instruments.
  - a. This worked fairly well up until the last 2 years.
  - b. AP Courses are now all 36 weeks
  - c. Last semester we had 54 students without a band class during the day.
3. Marching band is held after school during marching season.
4. Concert Bands meet after school during concert season; there are no bands able to meet during the school day.
5. both Middle Schools have their top groups during their 1<sup>st</sup> period.
  - a. This conflicts with the High School schedule and at this point cannot be resolved.
  - b. Prior to this the Middle School groups met after the lunch hour and lined up with the "off" period at the High School.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

1. Campus eligibility rate 70%
2. Band program eligibility rate 93%
  - a. must provide peer tutoring to ensure eligibility.
  - b. must sacrifice class time for "study hall".
  - c. must monitor student's progress every 3 weeks.
  - d. must ensure students are receiving help where necessary.
  - e. must dismiss students for tutorial during rehearsals.
3. Mandatory tutorial classes impact Middle School program enrollment a bit.

## **RECRUITING 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TO 9TH**

1. 9<sup>TH</sup> Grade retention is the responsibility of the High School Director
2. Important priorities for effective recruiting
  - a. Personal contact
  - b. Help MS students before asking to join your program
  - c. Show the MS students what the HS band is throughout the year
  - d. Let the MS directors run their programs, that is their problem
    - i. Top down management DOES NOT WORK
  - e. Who needs who
    - i. The middle school directors responsibility is to recruit for the MS
    - ii. The MS directors don't need the HS directors to do their job



- iii. The HS directors must have the MS kids and directors to do theirs
- f. Hazing
  - i. Kick them out IMMEDIATELY and make it public, outside of being COMPLETELY illegal it will destroy your program quicker than any other single item. The most focused statement of zero tolerance you are capable of must be given each year.
  - ii. Explain the damage it causes, most kids get the idea
- 3. Activities to aid in recruiting
  - a. Football season
    - i. Have selected 8<sup>th</sup> graders accompany the HS band weekly
    - ii. Band Night at the end of the season
    - iii. Have selected 8<sup>th</sup> graders accompany the HS to UIL contest
  - b. Concert Season
    - i. Perform Xmas ensembles at the MS or have them come to you
    - ii. GYM PERFORMANCE
      - 1. Full "year in review" performance for all MS band students at each feeder MS gym.
      - 2. Timing: should be right before choice slips come out
    - iii. Near middle school Concert Contest, have select High School players "sit in" with the middle school band and have the High School director clinic the pieces.
  - c. Counselors/Scheduling
    - i. Visit MS and give example of choice slip with proper course numbers to all MS band students
    - ii. Visit with MS counselors and give them the same information
    - iii. Develop working relationship with the MS counselors
- 4. Auditions (This may not work in all situations)
  - a. Not necessary for 8<sup>th</sup> graders
  - b. during marching season just assign parts based on MS director recommendations
  - d. Have chairs utilizing All-Region material at the end of marching season
- 5. Graduation
  - a. Have 8<sup>th</sup> graders perform with the HS at graduation
- 6. Summer Band
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> session only for Freshman and squad leaders
  - b. 1 week only, very basic marching
  - c. divide into squads, squads name themselves
  - d. At the end of the week have march off, select "honor squad"
    - i. They get Botana platter everyone else gets hot dogs
    - ii. Squad leaders select outstanding squad member and give "homemade" button.

# **Developing Successful Band Programs in Disadvantaged Areas**

**Oscar R. Herrera**  
**Director of Performing Arts Donna ISD**

We represent 3 uniquely organized districts all with economic challenges. The types of programs are: 5A with a student population of over 6,000 students; 5A from a single high school community; and a large city with several high schools.

I represent the single High School community. I will discuss the following major areas of organization:

1. Budget
2. Personnel utilization
3. Student type
4. Scheduling
5. Eligibility
6. Recruiting both from MS and HS
7. Politics

## **DONNA**

Overview: 1 high school ( 5A ), 3 middle schools, 12 elementary.  
Student population is approx. 2,400. The band program has 200 members.

### **Budget**

1. Unique considerations
  - a. Our budget is very adequate for the needs of the one HS and the 3 MS. ( Donna ISD is the 6th poorest district in the State of Texas. )
  - b. The band as a group does only 2 fund raisers. We raise from the festivals and UIL events we host ( \$30,000 ) and our Band Booster group raises the difference doing the usual type of activities. ( car wash, concessions at football games )
  - c. The school district pays for most of the students needs. ex. reeds, valve oil, flip folders, instruments ( in most cases ) instrument repair ( in most cases ) uniforms ( marching and tuxedo )
  - e. Being that I am the Performing Arts Director, I can move funds and assist the different groups in special circumstances without much trouble.
  - f. Capital outlay is a negotiable issue every year. It



has been as much as \$60,000 and as little as \$20,000 ( this is for 3 MS's and 1 HS.)

- g. Most of the instruments are furnished by the school. Instruments not furnished by the school are Beginner Flutes, Alto Sax, Clarinets, Cornets and Percussion. All other instruments are on inventory.
- h. We do have a \$25 annual fee for renting of school instruments.

### **PERSONNEL/STAFF**

- A.    2     Flute teachers
- 2     Clarinet teachers
- 2     Double reed teachers
- 2     Saxophone teachers
- 2     Trumpet teachers
- 3     Low Brass teachers
- 3     French horn teachers
- 2     Percussion teachers

Some of these teachers do double on other instruments and teach theory, jazz, mariachi & applied classes. Also from this group is our arranger & drill writer.

- 1.    The greatest challenge regarding personnel is finding staff the students can relate to.
- 2.    The Band staff consists of 12 staff members. The staff is divided equally between the 3 MS and some teach at two different MS when the schedule allows.
- 3.    Middle School has a specialist for each instrument.
- 4.    All individual lessons are given by the staff. We have no private lesson program.
- 5.    We have 3 performing and competing groups at the HS and each MS has 2 performing and competing groups. This allows for all staff that are interested in conducting to be actively involved.

### **STUDENT/PARENT TYPE**

- 1.    Entire school district is on free lunch.
- 2.    Only 10% of the student population has one parent with a degree.
- 3.    85% have at least one parent with only a HS diploma.
- 4.    98% both parents work.
- 5.    95% do not have cable TV.
- 6.    95% do not have a computer.
- 7.    65% students work after school.
- 8.    I have had to use school transportation so that parents could attend Region and All-State concerts to hear their child

- perform.
9. We have a small booster club (25 members); made up mostly of our more educated parents. The other parents are more apathetic to the activities of the Band and their child. Most of them just drop off their child for the event and pick them after the event is over. I am sure that I have had some parents that have never heard their child perform.
  10. In many cases the directors are more of a father figure than the parents.
  11. But once you get those parents on your side, there is no one more loyal and hard working. Once they see the results and enjoyment their children are having you will probably get every child for that family in the band.

## SCHEDULING

1. All band students meet 1st period.
2. We do have a problem with AP classes ( in some cases the student comes every other day but that is with my permission and looked at on an individual basis )
3. We are on block . ( but we still see the band every day )  
How do we do this?
  - 1st All students have band 1st period
  - 2nd We have all the band students take their study hall 2nd period. We schedule band 1st period so that both band and study hall are back to back. The compromise is that we can only use half of the block time for rehearsal the other half is study hall.
4. Marching Band Season
  - A. Start at 7:00 am every morning and end at 8:45 ( except Wed. )
  - B. One evening practice on Tues. from 6 to 8:30 pm
  - C. Monday & Thursday after school are for lessons and sectionals.
5. Concert Season
  - A. Start at 7:15 am every morning and end at 8:45
  - B. Sectionalize on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday ( during class time )
  - C. Full band on Thursday and Friday ( during class time )
  - D. Sight reading on Thursday after school. ( We read 3-5 tunes ) We finish as soon as we read all the selections
  - E. After school is for private lessons or extra sectional help.

6. Middle schools do not have class till 9:30 am  
( this allows all my staff to come to the HS in the morning )  
I only use 6 directors on the marching field. The others are inside giving lessons during marching practice. After HS band in the morning the bulk of the staff then goes to the MS for the rest of the day.
7. Middle school beginner classes are homogeneous. We have specialists on every instrument teaching. The performing groups are scheduled around the lunch periods.  
( this will help add a little more time )

## **ELIGIBILITY**

1. Campus eligibility is at 65%
2. Band is at 95%
3. To ensure this we do the following
  - a. Must dismiss for tutorial during rehearsals.
  - b. Monitor students every 3 weeks
  - c. Must sacrifice class time for study hall

## **RECRUITING**

### **Beginners**

1. Special invitations to 5th grade students with high reading and math scores.
2. Presentation to all 5th grade students.
3. Christmas concerts at ALL elementary schools ( divided between all the performing groups MS and HS )
4. Instrument demonstration

### **8th Grade**

1. Invitation to go with the high school band on football games, contests and parades.
2. Band Night ( MS Bands join the HS Band at the game )
3. HS band sits in with MS bands and rehearses UIL Concert selections

## **POLITICS**

1. Get to know your Board Members as well as you feel comfortable. **AT LEAST THEIR NAMES**
2. Get to know your Superintendent and upper school officials
  - A) Transportation Dir.
  - B) Maintenance Dir.
  - C) Business Dir.
3. How? you ask!
  - A) Invite them to your Staff parties



B) Golf

C) Invite to Band functions

4. "Person" of the Year

This is an award the Band Dept. gives every year to an individual who has helped champion the Performing Arts throughout the school year.

( This makes it very difficult for say the Business Dir. to cut your budget when he or she was your "Person" of the year. Especially, with the big giant plaque you present them, hanging right behind their desk. )