

2003 TBA CLINIC: SCOTT MCADOW– BAND ORGANIZATION: COPING

I. INTRODUCTION

- A) There is no doubt that all of us like to believe that we are organized. Who really wants to say ... “ I am a disorganized mess!” But the reality is, for those of us who call themselves Band Directors, we all become wonderful at justifying why we did not meet this or that deadline.
- B) With that in mind, the next question has to be, “What is *effective organization* for a supposedly successful band director?”

II. GETTING STARTED

- A) First of all, getting organized can and probably needs to be a gradual process. Go one step at a time.
- B) Step one is picking a system that you believe you can work with.
- C) With any system, the key ingredient is to follow through with personal discipline and maintenance applied to the method that you have chosen.
- D) Decide TODAY, not tomorrow, when in your day that you will stop everything for about 15 minutes to devote exclusively to the process of organization.

III. THE PROCESS BEGINS

- A) Hang in there, the 1st step simply is not that tough.
- B) The earlier in the day you find time to devote to organization, the better off you will be.
- C) Try to find a conference period that your entire staff can share.

IV. THE STEPS IN THE PROCESS

- A) Brace yourself, you are about to make a list.
- B) As you make your short list, focus on tasks that are attainable – goals that are easy and that you feel confident about completing. If you will utilize your organizational tool, whether that is a planner, a notepad, a palm pilot, or even something else, as a *central* location for all of your organizational needs – I think that you will be surprised how much this will help you.
- C) So, relating to that idea, make a list each day under the day of the week.
- D) At the beginning of each week, make a master list of the tasks for the entire week.
- E) As you begin to get accustomed to this system, gradually start adding more organizational skills.
- F) Perhaps it will be a big adjustment for you to place the accountability on yourself, it is possible.

V. SPECIFICS OF THE PROCESS – THE DETAILS

- A) First of all, keep your organizational source with you at all times.
- B) Write down phone messages each day. They go into the planner, as a list, on the day that they come in.
- C) Now, relating to the planner, get used to the idea of keeping it around all of the time. You will start to feel relieved that, as the commercial says, “You have a one source place for all of your needs.” For example, you go to a faculty meeting, and you get a handout for the semester exam schedule. Instead of throwing it

somewhere in your office, clip it into the page with the date of the upcoming final exams!

- D) **PHONE NUMBERS** – There are many great ways to keep up with needed numbers. This brings up the idea of having more than one place to keep things, which is not only valuable to you, but the responsible way to operate.
1. Things that are important should be backed up.
 2. Write down phone messages in the planner. Then have a record of the call and the phone number for future reference. If you think that you may need that number in the future, then store it in two other places: your cell phone and in the alphabetical address section of my planner.
 3. When dialing a phone number, if you do not have it stored in your cell phone, store it before you even dial it.
 4. Another helpful idea is to keep track of the calls that you make.

VI. ADVANCING THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS PAST THE BEGINNER STAGE

Be sure that your expectations of yourself are a so-called happy medium. Truly useful and effective organizational skills develop over a period of time – not overnight!

VII. PRIORITIZING ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS

- A) The skill of prioritizing needs to be constructed, developed, and utilized.
- B) To prioritize, revert back to your list of tasks for the day, and renumber them in color, or highlight them, or even go ahead and place an arrow in front of them telling which things must be carried out or put off until another day.

VIII. DELEGATING ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS

- A) The first rule of delegating tasks is to be selective of who you can reliably turn the work over to.
- B) Help is out there; you simply must get creative sometimes looking for it. Here are some possibilities for you:
1. At both the junior high and high school level, there are usually parents who really want to volunteer and help the band program.
 2. If you have a Band Booster Club organization, consider asking one of your officers to put out a call for help at the next booster club meeting.
 3. If you want to be more selective (and quite frankly, a lot of times this is a good idea), ask your booster president for ideas.
 4. When delegating to parents, you also should very seriously weigh what tasks to give them.
 5. If you do not have the benefit of an actual Band Booster Club, there are still many ways to recruit appropriate volunteers.
- C) When you do succeed in lining up some clerical help, be sure that you are prepared with their volunteer jobs, including instructions, before they arrive.
- D) At some schools, there is the possibility of student assistants. Again, please keep in mind that when you allow others to assist you, you are still totally responsible for their work. Big time mess-ups will still be your fault!
- E) During the summer, especially at the close of school, and during the time of the summer when you are preparing for summer band camp – don't hesitate to use student leadership help.
- F) I would caution you against asking your students to give time for your projects once school starts, as I believe that once school starts – school is their job!

IX. BEYOND THE PLANNER – EXTENDING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS TO DAILY LIFE WITH THE BAND!

- A) Band students like structure, especially when presented in a positive way, explaining how it will help the entire band program run smoother and more efficiently.
- B) How about your office? Get a system going in there too.
 - 1. Work to have set places for things – especially long term storage.
 - 2. Have backups on important items
 - 3. Have a storage area devoted to all of the band trips that you have taken.
 - a) Related to this, particularly at the high school level, have a meeting preceding any overnight trip that is required of the student and at least one parent.
 - b) Prepare a thorough handout for this meeting that clearly states the expectations that you have for the band students on this overnight trip. Be sure to concisely list the consequences if a student breaks one of the rules.
 - c) This handout should also include itinerary, what to wear, what to bring, spending money, and emergency phone numbers.
 - d) You will be glad when you get ready to prepare next year's trip that you have a model setup to go by. You also have covered your tail!

X. ORGANIZING THE BAND STAFF

- A) As mentioned earlier, try to find a time every day that your entire staff can sit down together and communicate.
- B) You will find that the staff can operate more efficiently if you can provide lists for them.
- C) Even when delegating to your staff, you are responsible for the mistakes.

XI. ORGANIZING REHEARSALS

- A) Organization can make shocking differences in your rehearsals, both in and outside.
- B) You will be pleased with the additional items that you can accomplish if you think ahead of time about the structure of your practice.
- C) First, take the time before you ever pass the music out to the band to mark your scores. This includes any scores, whether marching, concert, or even ensembles.
 - 1. Specifically, mark note lengths, balance plans, direction and identification of melodic lines, direction and identification of accompanying lines, and key technical areas to drill.
 - a) For example, at a very basic level, such as summer band in early August, look for ways to help make it easier for the new members of the band to succeed.
 - b) One great place to start getting the band students used to marking their individual parts is with rests.
 - c) Follow-up with some type of accountability check.
 - 2. Design a master plan for tempo.
 - 3. Utilize sectionals for marking student parts.
Divide the band all the way down to individual sections.

4. Thus one of the main goals with score study and marking student parts and director scores is to have an almost finished musical product that is lacking of only one ingredient, the marked tempo
5. If you team-teach, then you need to be sure that this information gets to the other directors who are helping you.
6. The whole purpose of marking the music is to find a structured way to get from point A to B more correctly and more efficiently.
7. Another critical suggestion in this area is to consider starting any music that you hope to perform, especially UIL Concert music, in sectionals. Sight reading through any selection in a sloppy manner is simply allowing the band students to start learning the composition by forming bad habits that you will now have to go back and change!

D) Structuring your rehearsal time is crucial

1. Your daily drill should include exercises that warm-up the brass physically while allowing the woodwinds to adjust reeds and begin focusing on good sounds. Preceding this, some breathing exercises for the entire band can be very effective.
2. Daily drill should also include work on ear training, articulation, and note duration.
3. Part of this process should also include some type of scale based exercises.
4. Consider using a notebook for the entire year to record daily rehearsal plans for the entire year.
5. At the beginning of each week, make a detailed plan for individual sectionals that include goals for the entire

Structure your rehearsal to include at least some variety.

XII. SIGHT READING: AN ORGANIZED APPROACH

- A) First of all, all levels of public school bands need to practice sight reading on a daily basis in the Spring semester. If you do, and follow a logical plan, you are guaranteed to succeed.
- B) There are many great method books available out there. Start by reading unison lines from these.
- C) Gradually advance from unison to two part lines.
- D) The next step is to advance to simple tunes, again available out of method books.
- E) As you get close to contest, read regular tunes on Fridays.

XIII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, organization and structure can help many parts of your band program. Remember to be patient with yourself and your staff as you try to learn new ways to run the band program. The key to the success of any of these ideas is the degree to which you are willing to hold yourself and the students and staff accountable. Good luck!

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