

**TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION**  
**JULY 23, 2005**

**PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW**

**Richard C. Crain**

- Order the district's teacher application form in advance and complete the information requested before an interview. Some applications are extremely long and detailed. Be sure your form is neat, complete, and accurate. Be honest and do not embellish or exaggerate your experience or accomplishments. Distortions of the truth can come back to embarrass you.
- Prepare a personal resume in addition to the required teacher's application. This resume should generally be one to two pages and should be on quality paper. The quality and presentation of this document should have the highest priority. Write in phrases rather than in complete sentences. Be sure to include all facts about your education, including areas of leadership and work experience while still in college, if you are a recent graduate. Compose the resume from the employer's perspective, including areas you think will be of interest to the employer. List performing and teaching experience in your field. Expound on this information in the interview by listing experiences and describing the results achieved.
- On your resume's list of references, include only people that you know will follow through with a recommendation and only references that really know about you and your qualifications.
- Keep a copy of the personal resume on a computer. Update it each year in order to have this document ready throughout your career.
- Preparation: Practice the interviewing process with several peers or colleagues. Let them ask you questions that might surprise you. One common question is, "Why do you want this job?" or "Why are you applying for this job?" or "Why are you leaving your last position?"
- Be punctual to an interview. That means plan ahead and arrive early. Allow extra time for bad weather or traffic problems.
- The first impression is a lasting one. Dress professionally. Don't try to set a new fashion trend. Be well groomed. (Ask in advance about grooming policies, especially policies regarding facial hair for men.) Don't forget to shine your shoes. No ultra-short skirts for the ladies. Don't chew gum in the interview. Don't smoke just before an interview; your clothes will smell like smoke, which may offend the interviewer. Schools do not allow smoking; it is against the law. Needless to say, do not drink alcohol before the interview—or ever at a school function! It is safer to be on the conservative side.
- Have a *firm* handshake. This practice will exude confidence and friendliness. However, don't use a *hard* grip; the interviewer could have arthritis or another problem.

- Be polite. Say “Yes, Sir/Ma’am” or “Yes, I do...” instead of “yeah.” Avoid slang. Do not address the interviewers by their first name. Address the interviewer as Mr., Mrs., or Dr. Turn your cell phone off during the interview.
- Find out what you can about the district and the program you are applying for. Searching the website of a school district is a good way to find useful information about the school or position of interest. Say something positive about the program/school/district even if you think it needs a lot of improvement.
- Be confident. Think about an answer before responding. Always give the impression that you are willing to learn—and then keep learning about your craft throughout your career.
- Prepare a list of questions you wish to ask the administrator/interviewer. These questions should include items about the particular position for which you are applying. This practice will demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about your subject area. These could include questions about class sizes, budget, inventory, purchasing procedures, district philosophy, activities and honors of previous years, expectations, opportunities for growth, etc.
- If you are asked a question you cannot answer or one that exposes a weakness, state that you are currently working on this particular area to strengthen your skills. An interviewer will often ask candidates what their strengths and weaknesses are. Be prepared with an answer.
- You will be asked about classroom management and the disciplining of students. You most likely will be asked how you would handle a particular classroom disciplinary situation. Be prepared. Assure the interviewer that you will study that district’s management guidelines regarding student discipline. Most administrators want the classroom atmosphere to be such that the students are well behaved but relaxed enough to enjoy their classes.
- Demonstrate a passion for teaching kids and a love for music. Loving music is not enough. You must also love kids enough to work with them. Give the impression that you will not merely be a *presenter of information* but that you also will be a teacher who will “*transfer knowledge*” to your students.
- The subject of salary may be a sensitive issue. You may politely ask about this area at the end of the interview if it has not been brought up by the interviewer.
- Thank the interviewers for their time. Tell the directors/administrators that you are interested in the job and hope to hear from them. Say that you hope to have the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their program. *Never burn a bridge even though you might not think the interview went well.*
- Follow up with a thank-you letter after an interview. If an email is utilized, be sure to have someone proofread this document as well as the hard copy of a letter before sending it to the interviewer.
- Interview for several jobs. Even if you seem to be the front runner, don’t count on a position until it is officially offered to you.

## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR DURING AN INTERVIEW**

1. Briefly describe your student teaching or most recent teaching assignment.
2. What will be your biggest challenge in your first year of teaching?
3. Why are you leaving your previous teaching position?
4. How will you conduct a typical rehearsal or class?
5. What rhythmic notation do you use?
6. What is your instrumental performance background?
7. How will you integrate the other academic areas into your musical lessons?
8. How will you plan music programs to enhance the school image and to emphasize music education?
9. Describe the learning environment you would like to establish in your classroom.
10. What discipline approach works best for you?
11. Describe your most difficult student discipline situation and how you handled it.
12. Tell me about how you would handle yourself if, during a conference or telephone call, a parent becomes irate and uncooperative.
13. What strengths do you bring to a *teaching team*?
14. What part do parents play in their child's education?
15. How will you encourage your parents to do their part?
16. As you understand the essential functions of the position, are there any reasons that you would not be able to fulfill the requirements of the position?
17. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself?

## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATE TO ASK**

1. What is the school district's philosophy regarding music education?
2. What is the district's policy or philosophy about performances by musical organizations?
3. What is the district's policy concerning discipline?
4. What are the duties and responsibilities of the position? (Non-music classes, campus duties, travel to other campuses, etc.)
5. If personal travel is required, does this time come from preparation time or class time?
6. Is travel on district business reimbursed?
7. What items are covered by the school/district budget? (Music, transportation, equipment, instruments, instrument repair, office supplies, contest fees, uniforms, awards, etc.)
8. Is there a rotation schedule in the budget for replacement of instruments and uniforms?
9. Who pays for organizational travel? What trips are covered? (Contests, community parades, etc.)
10. Is there a policy regarding out-of-district and out-of-state trips?
11. Is there a parent booster organization? How active is this booster group? What are the guidelines?
12. What is the instrument inventory? Sheet music inventory?
13. What are the facilities like?
14. Where is the marching band practice area (if applicable)? What is its condition?
15. Ask about the beginners' program. How many times does it meet per week? How long are the class periods? In what grade do beginners start in music?
16. What are the specifics of the contract? (Beginning and ending dates, medical coverage, salary schedule, etc.)

## **Sample Resume – First-Year Teacher Information Is Fiction!!**

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Richard G. Wilson  
12 North Beal Street, New Haven, TX 60623  
713-333-2346 Home; 281-483-2389 Cell  
[rgwil@rr.com](mailto:rgwil@rr.com)

### **EDUCATION**

University of Houston, Houston, TX, Bachelor of Music Education, 2002

- Moores School of Music Wind Ensemble, 1997-1999, 2000-2001
- Moores school of Music Jazz Orchestra, 1999-2001
- University of Houston Marching Band, 1999-2001

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- Student Teacher, Lamar Junior High School, Conroe, TX, Spring Semester, 2002
- Private Trombone Instructor, The Woodlands High School, Conroe ISD, The Woodlands, TX 8/99-5/02
- Private Trombone Instructor, Cypress Fairbanks High School, Cy-Fair ISD, Houston, TX 8/97-12/01
- Marching Band Technician, The Woodlands High School, 8/97-11/01
- Member of Brass Line, The Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps, 1999-2000; Drum Corps International World Champions, 2000

### **COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE**

- Bible Teacher for fifth and sixth graders, Spring Baptist Church, 2001 to the present
- Trombone Soloist for seasonal concerts at local churches in the greater Houston area, 1994 to the present

### **HONORS**

- Dean's Honor List, University of Houston
- Selected by audition for Texas 5A All-State Symphonic Band, 1997
- Selected to perform in Europe with the Honor Band of America sponsored by Bands of America, 1997
- Selected as Drum Major, Oak Ridge High School Band, 1995

### **REFERENCES (Contact Information Provided Upon Request)**

- Tom Bennett, Director of Bands, University of Houston
- Eddie Green, Director of Bands, Retired, University of Houston
- Brett Johnson, Director of Bands, The Woodlands High School
- Charlotte Royall, Director of Bands, Lamar Junior High School
- Richard Crain, Director of Music, Retired, Spring ISD
- Rev. Mark Estep, Pastor, Spring Baptist Church

## **Sample Resume – Experienced Teacher Information Is Fiction!!**

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Roy G. Bradford  
12 North Beal Street, New Haven, TX 60623  
713-333-2346 Home; 281-483-2389 Cell  
[rgbrad@rr.com](mailto:rgbrad@rr.com)

### **EDUCATION**

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville TX, Master of Music Education, 2002  
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, Bachelor of Arts, 2000

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Head Band Director, Austin High School, Dallas, TX, 2003-05  
Assistant Band Director, Houston High School, Lubbock, TX 2000-03  
Student Teacher, Houston High School, Lubbock, TX 1999-2000  
Summer Camp Intern, Bands of America, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 2003

### **HONORS**

UIL Sweepstakes Award, Austin High School, 2005  
Superior Rating, Dallas Area Concert Festival, Austin High School, 2005  
First Division in Sight-Reading, Austin High School, 2004

### **COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE**

Orchestra Director, First Methodist Church, Plano, TX, 2004-05  
Youth Sunday School Teacher, Seventh Street Methodist Church, Lubbock, TX 2001-03

### **REFERENCES (Contact Information Provided Upon Request)**

Joseph Landry, Superintendent of Schools, Dallas, TX  
Troy Hanson, Principal, Austin High School, Dallas, TX  
Richard Coleman, Superintendent of Schools, Lubbock, TX  
Darrell Baggerly, Principal, Houston High School, Lubbock, TX  
Matthew McInturf, Director of Bands, Sam Houston State University  
Keith Bearden, Director of Bands, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX  
Don Johnson, Director of Bands, Houston High School, Lubbock, TX  
Rev. John Baisden, Pastor, First Methodist Church, Plano, TX

## AFTER YOU ARE HIRED

- Personal financial advice: Start saving a selected amount per paycheck immediately into a tax-sheltered annuity. Because your taxes are figured on the gross amount each pay period, this savings amount will mean a lower tax deduction from your net monthly income because sheltering lowers the gross amount being taxed. As soon as you can, increase this monthly deduction. Over the period of your employment of 20 years or more, contributing regularly to an annuity program will result in a substantial nest egg that will be a nice supplement to your teachers' retirement pension.
- Stay close to your college mentor, and find a mentor within your new school or school system. Ask questions. Do not allow yourself to become isolated with no opportunity for contact with those that could help you. Ours is a great profession that has a tremendous mentoring philosophy. Just don't wait until it is too late to get help.
- Ask for help regarding UIL contests in your new region; specifics may vary. Ask for a copy of the coming year's calendar and guidelines, contact information, etc. The recent standardization of the state's regions through computer registration for UIL contests will help reduce differences between the regions.
- Get to know your school's teachers, counselors, and administrators. Be sure to befriend the coaches and custodial staff. They can be a great help to your program.
- Be active in your TMEA and UIL region. Volunteer to help with activities, serve on committees, and eventually run for office. You can make a difference.
- If you are a first-year director or a first-year-in-Texas director, you need to be aware that the performance standards are very high. Frequent sectionals are a necessity, and fundamentals are very important! Listen to CD's of outstanding, award-winning bands and don't be afraid to ask questions of successful directors. Most directors are happy to share philosophies and techniques.

Richard C. Crain, Spring ISD Director of Music, Retired  
Consultant, Clinician, Program Evaluator, In-service Speaker  
7 Surrey Run Place, The Woodlands, TX 77384-4786  
936-321-8946 Home – 936-271-0667 Fax  
rcrain1@houston.rr.com