



Young Band Directors: Why They Must Have a Mentor

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Young Band Directors: Want to be Successful?

Get a Mentor

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What is Mentoring?

From Wikipedia

Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the mentee).

Ten Things to look for in a Mentor:

- 1. Experience-** There is nothing that can beat experience for helping a young band director learn by having an older, more experienced teacher helping you make decisions and guiding you through your quest to be a successful band director! You don't have to declare someone your mentor, or sign an agreement. A mentor can be someone who is a friend or co-worker who happens to be in a position that lends itself to being your mentor.
- 2. Character-** Your mentor should be a person that you respect and admire. Many times a mentee patterns his or her life after the life of the mentor and thus you want to ensure you are following a person that you look up to, has good character and you can trust with your career!
- 3. Motivated-Enthusiast-** A mentor should be someone that is motivated to help you succeed and improve your teaching skills. He or she loves what they are doing by being a mentor because they know they are making a difference in the world!
- 4. Availability-Time-** Your mentor needs to be available for interaction. It can be great to have a really successful person mentoring

you, but if they are not available to you for personal interaction it can make the process more difficult. Of course with phone, e-mail and texting it is much easier to have a long distant relationship and still be effective.

5. Open-minded with a good balance of similarities and differences compared to your strengths and weaknesses. You need a mentor that is open-minded. This will allow you to progress in a way you need to progress, not necessarily in the way the mentor would prefer.

6. Caring-Respectful- We all want people to think what we're doing is important; especially our mentor. A mentor needs to care about your success as a band director just as much as you do. This is a person that should help you up when you fail or get off course and all of this starts with the mentor caring about you and the success of your program!

7. Positive- Your mentor needs to be positive and help keep you positive. If you spend a meaningful amount of time with your mentor, and they are positive, this is bound to rub off on you. Remember, good thoughts in, good thoughts out. People want to work with other positive people. Henry Ford says "Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right!"

8. Successful and Confident- It is important that the person you have as your mentor be a person that has had some degree of success as a band director. Tap into that knowledge by having them as your mentor! Confidence is not a must, but let's face it, we are just naturally attracted to someone who is confident and comfortable in their skills as a band director and mentor!

9. Believes in you- A mentor needs to believe in your potential as a band director! If they are not sold on you, they are less likely to put all of their effort into the mentor-mentee relationship. No one wins in this relationship and both parties are wasting their time!

10. Honest, with excellent communication skills- A mentor-mentee relationship is most beneficial when you can both allow yourself to be absolutely honest with each other. This helps build trust and credibility with each other, which is vital in a healthy relationship. It's a complete waste of time if you are not honest with each other. The mentor must be able to communicate in a manner that allows for understanding that transfers knowledge to the mentee and application of those skills in a manner that is observable by the mentor!

Remember, a mentoring relationship is only as good as the sum of its parts. This is only a guideline for what to look for in a mentor.

From a young band directors point of view...

What you need:

1. Experience – You do NOT know it all. Find someone who is willing to put you in situations that you may feel most uncomfortable with in your teaching abilities in order to gain experience. These mentors must guide you and be speaking in your ear to help you along the way.

2. A Trusting Relationship – This is a two-way street. Find someone you can trust to guide you in the right direction. What do you want to achieve and will they help you do it? Be absolutely honest with each other 100% of the time.

3. Goals – Where do you want to be in 5, 10, 20 years down the road? Set a goal for yourself and make an action plan with your mentor on how you will achieve your goals.

4. Break down your barriers – Like with experience, you need to understand that there are a lot of things you don't know. Find a mentor who will be straightforward with you from the beginning. Understand that they will tell you what you need to hear, but you can't take it personal. It's BAND.

5. ASK FOR HELP! – If you don't know something, find it out. It's not always good to learn by doing. Be proactive and ask your mentor for help. Remember, your mentor has been through everything you've done before and seeking help will prepare you for the unexpected.