



Clinicians: What Are They Good For?

**CLINICIANS:
Merlin Patterson and Randy Vaughn**

Texas Bandmasters Association 2012 Convention/Clinic



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Clinicians: What Are They Good For?

Texas Bandmasters Association Convention

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presented by

Randy Vaughn - Klein ISD (Retired) (banfluman@comcast.net)

Merlin "Pat" Patterson - Cypress-Fairbanks ISD (Retired) (pattam777@aol.com)

Clinicians: Why?

- Improvement of an individual piece or entire contest program.
- Improvement of fundamental skills.
- Advice on programming and score preparation.
- Advice on setting and reaching long-term and short-term goals.
- Learn new techniques for solving old problems.
- Assess strengths and weaknesses in the program and help formulate a plan for improvement.
- Help inexperienced teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Improvement of individual and ensemble teaching skills.
- A fresh set of ears.
- Taking your program to the next level.
 - ◆ Less than satisfactory UIL ratings to consistent first divisions
 - ◆ Consistent UIL first divisions to honor band competitiveness

How to pick a clinician and factors that may influence that decision:

- Word of mouth.
- Recommendations from the other directors in the field.
- Your own research.
- Where you live and cost may be a factor.
- Personalities and priorities that fit your own.
- Do you want to use more than one clinician?
- Budget. How much do you want to spend? Cost ranges from \$50.00 per hour to \$125.00 per hour.
- Use of more than one clinician; make sure you don't get conflicting information (see below).

Use of Clinician Services:

- Varsity band only.
- All competing bands.
- Total program - vertical team.
- Beginners.

Two Schools of Thought

Old School

A clinician is used one or two times in the spring to help put the finishing touches on the band's UIL program.

New School

A clinician or even multiple clinicians are used throughout the school year, not only to aid in contest preparation, but also to help guide the director/band on fundamentals, development of technique, programming, etc.

Conducting vs. Not Conducting

The decision on whether the clinician will actually conduct the band during the clinic will vary with each situation and each clinician. Some clinicians insist on conducting; others don't want to. The following are things that should be considered.

Clinician Conducts

- What is the preference of the clinician?
- Allows director to step back and really listen to the band.
- Is the clinician a good conductor?
- Conducting may take away from the clinician's assessment/diagnostic abilities.
- Has the band been trained to follow a conductor, not just YOUR conducting?
- More of an "Old School" thing.

Director Conducts

- Allows clinician to use all of their energy on listening, assessment and improvement.
- Students will be more comfortable with their own conductor.
- Ensemble problems will not be created by unfamiliarity with the conductor.

A mix of the two can be very beneficial, IF the clinician is a good conductor and IF your students have been taught to follow conducting. Regardless of which way you go, make sure both the director and the clinician know exactly what is going to happen before the clinic.

Expectations for the Host Director

Communicate

- Schedule clinics early to get the times and dates you want.
- Discuss fees with your clinician and how and when the clinician will be paid.
- Let clinician know your expectations - or if have no idea, consult with clinician regarding goals and needs; long term and/or short term.
- A consultation with the clinician, prior to the school year, at which goals and expectations are discussed, is advised.
- Communicate with the clinician regarding all financial matters (see below).

Clinic environment

- Students need to be prepped on the purpose of the clinic and on how to behave.
- Director may want to give a brief biography of the clinician prior to the clinic. This helps the clinician form relationships with students and director.

- Have room set up, organized and ready to go.
- Students and director should be on best behavior.
- Students need to have instrument, mutes, Daily Drill, music, pencils, chorale, and all other needed material and equipment.
- Student nametags are strongly recommended. Calling a student by name creates a better rapport and a more positive, productive working environment.
- Director should not be a "translator." Many directors feel the need to repeat/rephrase the information the clinician gives. This just slows down the rehearsal and wastes time.
- Don't make excuses.
- Whenever possible, let the clinician determine the pace of the rehearsal.

Student Behavior

- Eye contact with clinician when he or she is talking.
- When asked questions, students should respond. The director may have to teach this skill.
- Start and stop on time or keep instrument in playing position.
- Mark music. Students and directors need to take notes and/or record clinic.
- No talking.
- Students should put forth a positive effort to do what the clinician asks, even if it is contrary to what they have been previously taught. They should be told that the clinician may ask them to do things differently. That's one of the reason you have a clinician - new ideas.
- Special needs students. PLEASE make the clinician aware of these students. Doing so will eliminate many embarrassing and awkward moments.

Suggestions to help clinician have an enjoyable and productive time at your school.

- Scores and any other music or Daily Drill on stand set up when the clinician walks into the room.
- A chair or stool if it is a long day.
- Water
- Lunch and/or dinner if the clinician is there during those times.
- After-clinic discussion. Ask/answer questions. Set goals for next clinic.

Expectations for the Clinician:

- Be reliable and be on time.
- Proper attire
- Positive attitude
- Enthusiasm/energy
- Ability to communicate
- High level of musical skills and knowledge
- A wide variety of strategies
- High expectations
- Caring attitude
- Knowledge of literature
- Absolute honesty
- Professional conduct ALWAYS

Using Multiple Clinicians

Using more than one clinician can be a very beneficial thing. The obvious benefit is the access to more ideas, techniques, and points of view. Here are some guidelines.

- Decide if you want to use one clinician or multiple clinicians.
- Decide if you want to go "Old School" or "New School" or a combination of the two; depends on your goals and needs.
- In general, it is best to have someone who shares your basic concepts of tone production, band sound, balance, articulation, etc. If you use more than one clinician, make sure their information does not conflict.
- There are many different "paths to the mountain top," and a variety of views and techniques can be very beneficial, but "too much of a good thing" - i.e. too much conflicting information - can create confusion and loss of confidence.
- Make sure all of the clinicians are aware of each other. This alone can avoid confusion and conflicting information and may even lead to a cooperative working "team effort" between the clinicians.

The Business Side

- Communicate - before and after the clinic
- Arrange all financial matters - i.e. clinician fees, expenses, payment schedule, etc. - prior to the (first) clinic. Make sure both the director and the clinician know exactly what to expect.
- Pay the clinician in a timely manner, usually within two weeks of the clinic unless other arrangements have been made.

Final Thoughts

Clinician Anxiety

There are directors who want help and know they need help, but are apprehensive about enlisting the services of a clinician. Some directors develop a great deal of anxiety over the very thought of having a clinician. Many directors do not use a clinician because they are intimidated by the clinician, lack confidence in their own work, or they are afraid that the clinician will talk about them and/or their band. Don't be worried about what a clinician may think about you and your band. A clinician is there to help you, not to make judgments. He/she is on your side. You may have to step outside your comfort zone at first, but in the long run you and your students will benefit.

Don't Be Afraid to Pick and Choose

Use the clinician's suggestions as you see fit. Changes or suggestions made by the clinician are not set in stone. If you do not like the clinician's suggestions, don't use them or modify them to something that will work for you. Remember, YOU are the director.

"Always try to associate yourself with and learn as much as you can from those who know more than you do, who do better than you, who see more clearly than you." - President Dwight D. Eisenhower

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