



Developing Your Color Guard

CLINICIANS:

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DEMONSTRATION GROUP:

Claudia Taylor Johnson High School Color Guard

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Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



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**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
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Claudia Taylor Johnson High School Band

Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 clinic 'Developing Your Color Guard'
supplemental handout

"Noble Eightfold Path"**

*Adapted from the book "Eleven Rings: The Soul of Success"
by Phil Jackson and Hugh Delahanty

1. RIGHT VIEW--involves looking at the color guard as a whole and working together as a team, like five fingers on a hand.
2. RIGHT THINKING--means seeing yourself as part of a system rather than as your own one-man-band. It also implies going into each rehearsal/competition with the intention of being intimately involved with what's happening to the whole team because you're integrally connected to everyone on it.
3. RIGHT SPEECH--has two components. One is about talking positively to yourself throughout the rehearsal and not getting lost in aimless back talk ("I hate these long hours," "I'm not into this rehearsal"). The second is about controlling what you say when you're talking with others, especially your teammates, and focusing on giving them positive feedback.
4. RIGHT ACTION--suggests making moves that are appropriate to what's happening in rehearsal instead of repeatedly showboating or acting in ways that disrupt team harmony.
5. RIGHT LIVELIHOOD--s about having respect for the work you do and using it to heal the community rather than simply to polish your ego. Be humble. You're getting better at your craft, something that's really simple. And fun.
6. RIGHT EFFORT--means being unselfish and exerting the right amount of energy to get the job done. There's no substitute for effort, and my addendum is, if you don't give effort, you'll sit down in rehearsal.
7. RIGHT MINDFULNESS--involves coming to every rehearsal with a clear understanding of our plan of attack, including what to expect from your instructors. It also implies rehearsing with precision, making the right choices at the right times, and maintaining constant awareness throughout the rehearsal, whether you're being worked with or not.
8. RIGHT CONCENTRATION--is about staying focused on what you're doing at any given moment and not obsessing about mistakes you've made or bad things that might happen in the future. Clarity of mind will allow you to not set roadblocks in your progression in a rehearsal setting.

Setting Expectations With Your Color Guard Staff:

- Ensure your and your staff are on the same page in terms of goals. What do you hope to achieve in your first season? What are your long term goals for the group? For short term goals, be specific--for example, what technique programs do you want to implement, and how specifically are you going to get the members to achieve these goals?
- Plan out your daily, weekly, and monthly rehearsal goals ahead of time, but leave room for flexibility.
 - If the staff knows what needs to get accomplished ahead of time, they can pace the rehearsals more effectively and efficiently.
 - Leave room in your weekly rehearsal lesson plans for unexpected occurrences; i.e. thunderstorms, practice location changes, music changes, drill changes, etc. setting aside little bit of unstructured time each week will allow you to handle these occurrences quickly without putting you behind schedule.
- Keep your staff informed. Staff meetings or weekly/daily emails can be helpful! If the Colorguard staff knows what the weekly plans are for the band, they can better plan their own rehearsals. They may not always align perfectly but it helps when everyone is on the same page in terms of communication.
- Set expectations for conduct with your staff as well as with your students and parents. What are your non-negotiables? How will you handle various situations if they arise? Letting the staff know what is expected of them up front will allow you to address behavioral concerns more effectively if they should happen. Annual employment contracts can be particularly helpful if your district allows them.
- If you do not have a budget for a larger guard staff, be resourceful! Utilize your Color Guard captains to assist with logistics (i.e. uniform fittings, ordering gloves, taping poles, etc.) but remember they can also assist with other aspects of the programs. Your captains should also be able to help with teaching newer members choreography, spending time with them on technique, etc.

Helpful Tips:

Do:

- Teach your students to accept feedback and criticism. Remind them (often) that you are correcting the mistake, not the person.
- Hold everyone to the same expectations. Accountability at all levels is an important part of the process. Teach everyone involved to be respectful to each other.
- Stay on top of your students' grades. Make plans to conduct weekly or bi-monthly audits. The Color Guard director or assistant should personally follow up with any student who is failing or on the verge of failing any class at any time.
- Learn to be resourceful! If you have a small budget, get creative with how you get the items you need, create costumes, etc. There are a lot of websites out there where you can order flags or uniforms at reduced prices from other programs across the country. If you have parents who can sew, have them make your flags and just buy the material. Barter/trade with other schools for items you need. You'd be surprised at the amount of resources available if you take the time to network and see what's out there!

Don't:

- Don't be too general with all of your comments to the students. Learn to give very specific corrections as well as general comments when needed. This is especially true for your color guard technicians, who should be focused more on details.
- As a color guard director, don't get bogged down by the details (that is what your technicians are for!). Details are very important, but 'don't lose the forest for the trees' as the saying goes. Sometimes you need to take a step back and look at the big picture. Once you see what that big picture should be, you can plan which details to focus on.
- Don't 'spoon feed' information to your students all the time. In the beginning, you will spend an inordinate amount of time giving your students information--this is expected when laying the foundation to your program. However, once your students have a good grasp of the basics, leverage teaching moments by asking them open-ended questions. Encourage them to find answers for themselves and offer guidance but not the answers right away. Teaching them to connect the dots on their own will teach them a valuable life skill; it will also save you time in the long term because your kids will grasp details, performance qualities, technique, etc. at a much faster rate.
- Don't take your parent support for granted! Be sure to thank them for their assistance and teach the students to be thankful too. Programs are not successful without parent involvement!
- Don't ever forget that your number one goal is to teach these kids to be successful in life, not just in Marching Band. No matter what the sheets say, every student matters. If you invest the time into teaching your students the skills they need to succeed in life, you will see a correlation in the success of your program.