



# **Changing the Culture from the Inside Out: Motivating Kids and Community**

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## **Texas Bandmasters Association 2017 Convention/Clinic**

**JULY 20 – 22, 2017**

**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

**“Changing the Culture from the Inside Out”**  
***Motivating Kids and Community***

By:  
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We all sat in that sophomore level Music History class in college and dreamed about the wonderful band we were going to have someday.

After being hired as the Director of Bands for Seguin Texas ISD, I met with the student leaders and asked, “How can we make YOUR band better?”

- 1) Give the students the one thing they desire...RESPECT!
- 2) Create a relationship and a connection with the members.
  - a. My first question to my new band was “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The answers allow me to make some assumptions:
    - i. If “I don’t know” is the answer then we will spend some time and energy on setting goals, creating a culture of achievement and setting a reward system.
    - ii. If “I want to be a Doctor, Attorney, etc.” is the answer then you know that you have students that are driven, students that need and want to be pushed.

In Seguin we had both answers, so we created a program for THEM; for that set of leaders I asked this one question that changed EVERYTHING in the program DISTRICT WIDE!

I asked the students the first time I met them, “If you were the band director what would you change in YOUR band program?” Their answers became the driving force in everything we did! Their answers:

- 1 MORE DISCIPLINE
- 2 MOTIVATE THE STUDENTS
- 3 BE MORE PUNCTUAL
- 4 MAKE THE MEMBERS MORE RESPONSIBLE
- 5 CHANGE THE ATTITUDE
- 6 HAVE MORE PATIENCE
- 7 BE MORE COMPETITIVE
- 8 FUN
- 9 TRAVEL

Now everything we do is compared to the expectations set up by the members.

### MORE DISCIPLINE

YOU GOTTA SHOW UP and YOU GOTTA SHOW UP ON TIME and once you are in rehearsal you need to be quiet. It's better, but honestly, it's a work in progress.

### MOTIVATE THE STUDENTS!

As a staff we decided to perform more difficult literature and to perform more often. If you give the band 90 days until the next concert it will take the band 89 days to get prepared. Our average is a performance every 30 days. Because of a more intense schedule the members are far more motivated.

### MAKE THE MEMBERS MORE RESPONSIBLE!

- 1) As a staff we increased expectations. I trust the members to work out their music. That is a change from the past where members worked out every note in sectionals. It is now the members' responsibility to get the notes worked out at home and I work on the music. Set your expectations early and stick to your guns. I don't fight the kids, no arguing allowed! The members have input on sectionals and rehearsals. The kids set the schedule, therefore, the expectation is that they will attend and be on time.

Keeping track of their bow ties is a separate issue!

## CHANGE THE ATTITUDE

The band had done things the same way for about 10 years. Changing the attitude was and is something we work on every day. Our motto has become “Make the impossible, possible”. Most of the strategies we use are pretty basic.

- 1) Establish a report with the individual members. Ask what they are interested in. Ask about their families, their work, their hobbies. Then REMEMBER them and TALK to the kids about things they are interested in.
- 2) Build a consensus and take action.
- 3) Play EVERY event you can. We performed over 40 times from December to March. We had small groups play at Christmas, play the Rotary Club Christmas party, Chamber Banquet, Small jazz groups played the coffee shop and at every Art event in town. We played a lot!! Created a ton of positive energy, created a lot of awareness in the program...PLUS the kids learned and performed a bunch of chamber music. It was AWESOME!
- 4) Create Ownership! I asked the leaders how we can “Motivate the unmotivated” and then took action on their suggestions.

## HAVE MORE PATIENCE!

“It’s not their fault”. What is that old saying? “You don’t know what you don’t know”! We started from the VERY beginning and worked slowly until we could play the selection. I looked at every child and made adjustments in their hand position, embouchure, articulation, tone production...Everything and anything that would make the individual play better. During the first week of one hour sectionals the French horns played 4 measures..the tubas made it through one note. But, that one note was pretty ok!

## BE MORE COMPETITIVE

For marching band we scheduled some contests where the competition was more difficult. I targeted some bands that I wanted to be more competitive with; those bands that historically are better than Seguin. I said “We are going to be really competitive with a certain team. One of the staff said that realistically there was no way to be competitive. By the end of the season the band had won most of the competitions and had beaten most of the teams we targeted. It’s simple: GOAL MAKING WORKS!

## FUN

How do you make band more fun?

- 2) Enjoy the process. If you treat the kids with respect, work with a purpose, and expect greatness the process becomes enjoyable. Set your expectations early and stick to your guns. I don’t fight the kids; no arguing is allowed!
- 3) Make time to play! Schedule time to get to know each other outside of class.
- 4) We laugh A LOT!
- 5) Don’t take yourself so seriously! It’s music....it’s supposed to be fun!

## TRAVEL

Directors Choice called me in October 2016; another ensemble has cancelled their trip to New York to perform in Carnegie Hall. Do you want the slot? You will need to learn 40 minutes of music and fund raise a considerable amount of money. What’s next? I think a marching band on the moon would be cool!

FINALLY

As I type this clinic proposal, we are in New York preparing for the Seguin High School Bands' debut in Carnegie Hall. The band learned six selections including "Rhapsody in Blue" and raised over \$260,000 in just 90 days! The members rehearsed over the winter break, attended two additional after school band rehearsals per week plus their sectionals. The members learned to be outstanding baby sitters. They mowed lawns, raked leaves, painted, cleaned houses, sold cupcakes, tamales, tacos plus anything else make some money. Their families gave up their Christmas presents, worked extra shifts and twisted the arm of every relative they knew to get the money to send their kids on the trip. The band members made a commitment and fulfilled their responsibility to themselves, their families and the community. The kids learned the NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE and during the process, the kids became better people, better musicians and the Seguin Band became that band that I dreamed about leading in college.

March 12, 2017  
11:08pm