



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 26-28, 2018**

**Creating a Culture of Excellence in  
Your 2nd and 3rd Bands**

**CLINICIANS:  
Brittney Cook, Bryn Roberts**

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

# Creating a Culture of Excellence in Your 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bands

## Texas Bandmasters Association Convention 2018

Brittney Cook  
Briarhill Middle School, Lewisville ISD  
[CookB@lisd.net](mailto:CookB@lisd.net)

Bryn Roberts  
Reedy High School, Frisco ISD  
[robertsra@friscoisd.org](mailto:robertsra@friscoisd.org)

*Our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bands should prepare our students to move up to the top band but should also give these students a wonderful band experience in the meantime. Students should never have to wait until they are in the top band to experience excellence!*

### Band Placement

- Have the audition procedures and expectations be public knowledge and transparent. While you will always have students and parents who are unhappy with their placement, a clear and well-defined process makes these difficult conversations easier to navigate and will help the students and parents find a sense of acceptance even though they are disappointed.
- Make the band placement process as comprehensive as possible, taking into a consideration a variety of factors such as musical achievement throughout the previous year or semester, attendance, attitude, and academic eligibility. A broader and more inclusive process makes it more likely that the students will end up in the ensemble where they will be most successful. It also diminishes the role of bias and favoritism in the placement process.
- Older students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bands
  - The challenges: These older students may feel embarrassed, which can lead to them being either disruptive or apathetic and potentially a negative influence on younger students.
  - When placing older students, consider on a case by case basis what is best for the individual student and also for the band program as a whole.
  - Utilize these older students in a leadership role. (These same strategies can be used with more advanced students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bands.)
    - Models
    - Section leaders or other positions
    - Feature them or their section in a performance
- Be very cautious about basing band placement solely on discipline/behavior issues. Having all the disruptive students in one band does not set that band up for success and makes it difficult to create a culture of excellence.

### Bridging the Gap

- Similar vocabulary used in every class. Makes the transition from one to the other easier.
  - Can the students tell you what they are listening for when they play a specific exercise?
  - Are similar concepts being taught?
    - Individually
    - Section Sounds
    - Ensemble Sounds
- Know Your Audience
  - Where does band “rank” in their life?
  - If they enjoy band but playing sports is their “thing” – as long as they show up and fulfill the requirements of the class, all is well!

- Find your “workers” and give them further opportunities to grow.
- Band Programs NEED the solid, lower band kids.
  - They show up.
  - They have good attitudes.
  - They are rock-solid on their 3<sup>rd</sup> parts.
- Sectional structure
  - Invite more advanced students to the top band sectional.
  - Invite more advanced students to participate in the Region band process.
  - With 3 directors – split sectionals three ways.
    - With preparation, the students can graduate to the next level of the sectional.
  - Invite advanced lower band students to top band events.
    - Invitations must be earned through a rigorous process.
      - Invited to perform a piece with the top band.
      - Invited on a “top band only” trip.
  - Joint Pep Rallies or public/school performances.

## Similarities with the Top Band

- High expectations
  - The lower bands can sound beautiful.
  - The lower bands can get Superior ratings at UIL.
  - The lower bands can be equally prepared for concerts and contests.
  - The level of literature will be different; however, the quality of performance does not have to be.
- Sectionals, rehearsals, clinics
- Fundamentals
  - Similar structure and exercises for all bands, with alterations as necessary
  - Same language
    - Are you describing articulation and style the same way across the bands?
    - Are the “key words” the same?
- Region band participation
  - This will differ depending on the student.
  - Scales only
  - Part of an etude
  - Alternate etudes
  - Full region participation
- Objectives and pass-offs
  - Sometimes the same as the top band
  - Sometimes the same material but at a lower tempo or less demanding range for brass students.

## Differences from the Top Band

- More fundamentals, theory, rhythm and sight-reading will be needed.
  - Make rhythm more interesting with small changes or rhythm games.
    - Count the rests instead of notes.
    - WW count notes and Brass count rests.
    - Even and odd measures.
    - Play/count the entire page with different responsibilities for each section.

- Different groups each time: brass/ww, girls/boys, shoelace color, glasses/no glasses.
  - Make sight-reading more fun with changing styles and using recognizable songs.
    - Changing styles: sight-reading books, finale exercises, new pieces, etc.
    - Put songs they recognize into Finale – put subtle rhythm changes into the songs so they HAVE to read it or it will be wrong.
- It may take students longer to master concepts and to pass off objectives.
  - Objective sheets can have the same assignments for each band but have different expectations for passing it off.
    - Different expectations-meaning lower tempos or longer period of time in which to pass off.
    - Passing off the objective still requires a beautiful tone, good hand position, correct notes, correct rhythms, etc.
- A significant amount of time will have to be given to the details.
  - COMMUNICATION
  - Instrument Maintenance
  - Trip and Concert Itineraries
    - Can they answer very specific questions? Where are we putting our cases? How are you lining them up? How are you carrying your instrument? What is the first thing we will play on stage?
  - Concert etiquette
  - Uniform guidelines
    - What does it feel like to perform wearing a bow tie?

## Creating the Culture and Identity

- What culture do you want to create within your 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> band?
- Students in lower bands can be very sensitive to the perception that they are being looked down on or treated as “babies.” Do all you can to combat this misperception!
- How to balance creating a unique identity within the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> band but still striving for the “special-ness” of the top band.
- Share your high standards and your goals with the students.
- Build a sense of team pride.
  - Performance opportunities
  - Service projects
  - Celebrate your successes as a group and as individuals, both musical and non-musical.

## Repertoire

- Contrary to popular belief – there is good music for lower bands! You just have to search harder for it.
  - What skills will the students gain from the music?
    - New rhythm
    - New time signature
    - New key signature
    - Section exposure
    - Independent playing
  - Will it provide interest for the students and audience?
- Go EASY for UIL Contest.

- For UIL – good is good.
- Pick music that the students will sound good on and allow you to spend time on other things.
  - Fine tuning – phrasing, tuning, dynamics, style, matching articulations.
  - Further individual fundamental work.
  - Solos
  - Ensembles
  - Scales
- Go HARDER for Winter and Spring Concerts
  - Key word being HARDER – this could be slightly harder or drastically harder
  - For Winter Concert – try picking something that will work on skills needed for the UIL program.
  - For the Spring Concert – try incorporating a harder “top band concept”
    - Advanced time or key signature
    - Advanced rhythm
    - Advanced range
- Score study prior to picking music.
  - What is the orchestration for major cadence points?
  - Is the third of a Major chord on a note with a super sharp tendency for that instrument?
  - How many people play the root, third and fifth?
    - Look at the instrumentation AND how many students are playing that part.
  - Is it possible to easily rewrite it?

## **Building for the Future**

- Talk to your students about the future you envision for them—the kind of leaders they will be and where they will take the band program in the years to come.
- One of your most important jobs is to prepare these students to move to the top (or a higher) band. Frequently connect what you are working on with how it can benefit them in moving up.
- Talk to each individual student to help them set goals for next year. Create a plan together as to what they are going to do to reach their objectives.
- Tell stories of past students who have been in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> band and have gone on to experience great success.

*The strength and depth of a band program that has multiple bands comes from its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bands. In the best band programs, every band is excellent—from the top band to the bottom band. When we create a culture of excellence in our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bands, we positively impact both these students and the band program as a whole.*