

Recruiting: The Ongoing Process - Part Two

As the name implies, recruiting students for a band program is a continual process where, every year, students are encouraged to begin or continue their music-making.

An effective, “ongoing” recruitment program not only brings new students into the band program, but also has high visibility, good communication, and a curriculum with activities that are designed to provide new and exciting learning experiences that will help retain students.

While there are many reasons students decide to join the band and continue their music-making, there are also many reasons why students may decide to drop out of the band program. There are reasons students drop out that can be affected by the band director. These can be grouped in the following categories:

1. Public Awareness
2. Program Administration
3. Communication
4. Teaching Strategies

In the Spring 2000 issue of *Kjos Band News*, we looked at many ways that the visibility level and ensuing public awareness of a band program can be raised. In this issue of *Kjos Band News* we will examine program administration.

A good band director needs to be a good administrator. The following are helpful hints for being a good program administrator of your band program:

1. **Take time to be organized.** Arrange a specific time each day to receive and return phone calls, do memos, communiqués, and book work. Guard that time and try to minimize interruptions. Carry a conventional or electronic organizer. Good planning can maximize your time.
2. **Prepare a yearly calendar.** Include all concerts, special rehearsals, and all band activities that take place outside of the school day. Give a copy to students, parents/guardians, and administrators. It is important to stick to that calendar.
3. **Select your repertoire carefully.** Repertoire should be selected to meet your curricular goals. Determine how many years a student will be in your band program and select and program repertoire for that many years. In that way, students will be allowed to experience music representing the full spectrum of your curriculum. This may include, for example, marches, suites, overtures, programmatic music, multicultural selections, and historical pieces. Choose your repertoire so that it represents the highest quality that your band can play. Make certain that you select repertoire so that each student may grow in his or her understanding of comprehensive musicianship. Determine what concepts will be taught and what repertoire will be used to teach those concepts. Your repertoire should have active parts for all members of the ensemble.
4. **Be a team player.** Volunteer to participate on faculty committees. You will find it beneficial to volunteer to participate on your school’s scheduling committee.

5. **Strengthen relationships with band directors at all levels.** Good programs respect the work of directors at all levels. Work together to ensure a smooth transition from one level to another. Occasionally trade teaching responsibilities so that students see that you are a “band director team.” Some other ideas may include sharing concerts, exchange concerts, adjudicating one another’s bands, or team teaching. You may also choose to publish a district-wide concert calendar and attend concerts at other directors’ schools.
6. **Analyze dropout issues.** When a student drops out of the band program, attempt to determine the real cause for the student dropping out. The school counselor can be a very valuable resource in obtaining the real cause of student dropout. Determine if the dropout could have been avoided and, if possible, make the necessary changes. All band programs have dropouts. Try not to take a dropout personally.
7. **Solicit student evaluation.** Periodically ask students to evaluate the band program and your teaching. The students may often provide you with valuable information that will allow you to improve your teaching or give you the opportunity to explain your position and thus thwart potential dropouts.
8. **Schedule lessons for large instruments on band rehearsal days.** By scheduling lessons of students playing large instruments on days when the band rehearses, it minimizes the days students must bring their large instruments to school, thus avoiding transportation problems.
9. **Encourage the use of “luggage trolleys” with large instruments.** It is often difficult to recruit and retain students to play the larger instruments because they are heavier and less portable. This may be alleviated by issuing a luggage trolley to those students playing larger instruments.
10. **Pre-assign percussion parts.** This will reduce the waste of valuable rehearsal time and allow the percussion section to run more smoothly. In the **Standard of Excellence Comprehensive Method Books 1, 2, and 3** you can find reproducible Percussion Assignment Charts.
11. **Be flexible and imaginative.** When recruiting students who are small in stature to play tuba, consider having them start on “tenor tubas” (baritone or euphonium) and use the **Standard of Excellence BBb Tuba** book. Since they are playing from the tuba book, they will sound an octave higher than BBL tuba. When the students grow to the size where they can handle a full-sized instrument, switch them to the tuba. Since they already know the tuba fingerings, the transfer from baritone or euphonium to tuba will go smoothly.

A well-administrated program is an important component in recruiting and retaining students in the band program. If you have additional ideas that you want to share with your colleagues, send those ideas to *Kjos Band News*.

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