

Recruiting: The Ongoing Process - Part Four

Each year band directors are faced with the challenge of recruiting students into their ensembles. The number of students in an ensemble depends on both recruiting new students, and retaining existing band members. Recruiting thus should not be limited to finding new students, and wise directors understand the importance of “recruiting” existing members. There are many reasons why students choose to join, continue, or drop out of band programs. While the reasons are varied, those that a band director can directly affect can be grouped into the following categories:

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

The previous issues of *Kjos Band News* have addressed the categories of public awareness, program administration, and communication. In this issue of *Kjos Band News* we will examine the remaining category; teaching strategies.

Good teaching strategies and effective implementation of those strategies are at the heart of the educational process. Band programs may have good public awareness, effective program administration, and excellent communication with students, parents, and administrators, but without good teaching the program will not be successful.

Consider the following tips to ensure effective teaching strategies:

1. **Carefully select your repertoire.** The repertoire you select represents the material you plan to use to implement your curriculum. When selecting repertoire consider its musical merit, what you want to teach, and the appropriateness of its difficulty level for your ensemble. (For more detailed suggestions regarding selecting repertoire, see the **Standard of Excellence Conductor’s Score, Book 1**, page 569—574).

In selecting repertoire make certain that your students have new musical experiences each year. In a three-year program, for example, provide your students with three years of unique experiences, not just one year of experiences repeated three times. Also consider teaching the elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre, etc.) through varied experiences in history, style, and genre. For example, you may want to teach a specific harmonic concept while tracing its use through the historical periods, then compare and contrast that harmonic concept with its use in the music from a foreign land.

2. **Be committed to score study.** There is no substitute for knowing your music well. It is the director’s responsibility to teach the music to your students at the highest level possible. “Have the score in your head, not your head in the score.”

3. **Use a yearly calendar** to make certain that you are not over-scheduling your ensemble. Use this yearly planner to also ensure that all components of the school year's curriculum are addressed.
4. **Consider unit plans** where the elements of the music are studied each concert season.
5. **Plan your rehearsals carefully.** The next issue of *Kjos Band News* will address "Rehearsal Strategies".
 - A. Share your rehearsal objectives with your students.
 - B. Challenge your students with "what and why" questions that make connections between the music and real-life experiences.
 - C. Stress good fundamentals. Insist on good posture, hand position, embouchure formation, and breath support. Good fundamentals should include the mastery of scales, thirds, arpeggios, articulations, and percussion rudiments.
6. **Hone classroom management skills.** With effective classroom management, the teacher and a large group of students can share enjoyable and meaningful musical experiences.
7. **Be a good steward of rehearsal time.**
 - A. Set a specific time that the rehearsal will start.
 - B. Put music in folders prior to rehearsal.
 - C. Sell or distribute supplies before or after rehearsal. Many schools have the school store sell items such as reeds and valve oil.
 - D. Examine and repair instruments that are working before or after rehearsal. Have "loaner" instruments available for use when instruments require professional repair.
 - E. Pre-assign percussion parts. (See **Standard of Excellence Conductor's Score, Book 1**, page 622 for a Percussion Assignment Chart).
 - F. Orchestrate upbeat, high-energy rehearsals. Stand up to conduct. Minimize "down time."
 - G. Expect and demand the students' attention. The most important element of a good rehearsal is — SILENCE.
8. **Plan rehearsals to incorporate active parts for all instruments.** If some sections (often the percussion section) are tacit, have alternate activities in mind for them.
9. **List the rehearsal agenda on the board.** Next to each piece list the objective(s) and section(s) to be rehearsed.
10. **Stay with a piece** until everyone can recognize that the objective has been met. Be realistic so that students can realize success.
11. **Dress like a professional.**
12. **Use discipline appropriately.**
 - A. Good discipline can be stated simply "Say what you mean, mean what you say, and do what you say you're going to do."
 - B. Be pro-active. When students are actively engaged during rehearsals, disruptions are virtually eliminated.
 - C. Correct unwanted or unruly behavior by moving closer to the student, rather than by reprimanding the student and disrupting class. Some

students misbehave to receive attention, and providing this attention only reinforces their bad behavior.

- D. Avoid power struggles. Everyone loses.
- E. Discipline the offenders rather than the entire ensemble.
- F. Never discipline in anger. Allow for a cooling off period.
- G. Give praise publicly, but discipline privately.

Good teaching is an essential component of a quality band program. Putting these tips into practice will break down many of the barriers to student participation in band and will reduce the number of dropouts. Recruiting is an ongoing process.

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