

The Band Director as Servant/Leader

Me, a servant/leader? You've got to be kidding! How can a servant be a leader, or a leader be a servant?

While training young musicians to become band directors, a considerable amount of time is devoted to the study of music theory, music history, musicianship, stylistic practices, conducting, and to the pedagogy of the instruments in the ensemble. These studies are critical to the success of the band director and his or her students.

However, one important component that will determine the success or failure for the director receives little attention. That component is the training to become an effective *servant/leader*.

A band director's leadership can be positive or negative. We can *influence* our students to love music and learning, or we can *influence* them to feel exactly the opposite. A *servant/leader* not only leads but serves in his responsibility to meet the needs of his or her students. This requires great wisdom and a sensitivity to student's needs.

Successful *servant/leadership* is a dynamic and intricate process that engages the wills, emotions and spirits of distinct individuals. Our students will work harder and longer when they understand the overall significance of their contribution. This speaks clearly to the need to teach comprehensive musicianship to our bands. We should explain the music to our students as thoroughly as our understanding of the music permits. By doing so, we inform our students of the importance of their part and their contribution to the success of the entire ensemble. When a student appreciates their contribution, they will appreciate the musical goal that is before them.

We have an impact on the lives of our students and colleagues as we interact with them in the course of doing our job as band *servant/leaders*. We *influence* them by the quality of the work we do and the way we live our lives. *Students won't care how much we know until they know how much we care!* Love, trust and respect are the pillars of every relationship. It is our responsibility as band *servant/leaders* to cultivate a positive environment, primarily by setting a good example. Beautiful music and learning exist most often in an environment of love, trust, and mutual respect. These qualities are gained through an extended process. Thankfully, we often have our students for several years which provides the necessary time to develop those qualities in our student relationship. We face new situations everyday that challenge our values, our self-control, our creativity, our sensitivity as musicians, and our compassion. It is through these challenges and our response to them that we influence our students either for good or bad.

In his book, *Leadership Is An Art*, Max De Pree states "when leadership understands that it exists to serve rather than be served, it will do so with integrity. The leader is the servant of his followers in that he removes the obstacles that prevent them from doing their jobs. In short, the true leader enables his or her followers to realize their full potential."¹

Bruce Pearson

Music

We, as band *servant/leaders*, have the greatest job in the world! We have the privilege of providing inspired influence by helping young people to love music, love learning, love others and love themselves all while making beautiful music.

1. Max De Pree, *Leadership Is An Art*, (New York: Dell Trade Paperback, 1989), xvii-xviii.

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