

It's Time for a Little Spring Cleaning

With the grass turning greener and buds beginning to form on flowers and trees, it's clear that spring is here. Spring brings with it a sense of new beginnings and a fresh start. Spring also marks the time when we must do a little "spring cleaning." The winter months often see many of us collecting unwanted items that clutter our garages, attics, and closets. During the process of cleaning those havens of clutter, we may even find or rediscover something that's of value to us. It may be an old, but prized baseball glove or, perhaps, a cherished family photo. Spring cleaning our career may also help us rediscover something of great value — PASSION. In order to rediscover that passion we may have to re-evaluate what is important to our students and to us. Someone once said, "The good is the thief of the best." We may be involved in many good activities but do they take away from that which is better? If we lack passion in our teaching, it just may be that we've allowed clutter to cause us to lose our PASSION.

Before one starts the spring cleaning project, a need for it must be realized. Does your life, as a band director, exude an attitude of hope, enthusiasm, and energy, or do you display apathy, resignation or defeat? The great bicyclist and cancer survivor, Lance Armstrong, who has won the Tour de France four times now states with great passion,

"I want to die at 100 years old with an American flag on my back and the star of Texas on my helmet after screaming down an Alpine descent on a bicycle at 70 miles an hour. I want to cross one last finish line as my wife and my 10 children applaud. Then I want to lie down in a field of those famous French sunflowers and gracefully expire, the perfect contradiction to my once-anticipated poignant early demise. "¹

That's fine for Lance Armstrong, a world-class bicyclist, but how about me an inexperienced, or perhaps, even a veteran, band director? Don't allow the unimportant activities to rob us of our PASSION. All great developmental leaders say that it's impossible to impart passion to anyone. Instead, the challenge is to discover, or perhaps rediscover the passion that is already within and build on it - fan it into flame and make it come alive!

All of us entered this wonderful, exciting, challenging, and rewarding field of music education because we love kids and we love music. Let's not lose our focus.

In order to rekindle that flame of passion in our teaching, we must first have a solid grasp of our philosophy of music education based on a curriculum that emphasizes comprehensive musicianship. This philosophy allows us to perform what we are studying rather than study what we are performing. Having a clear vision of our philosophy of music education will allow us to have a solid foundation and will shape all that we do in the execution of our job from selection of repertoire, our attitude regarding competition, accepting performance requests, organizing rehearsals, to disciplining students. In other words, our philosophy shapes our curriculum, which defines our instructional activities and methodology.

Bruce Pearson

Music

A clearly defined and implemented philosophy of music education that emphasizes comprehensive musicianship, for the benefit of our students, will help us weather any storm that may rob us of our passion. It has been said, “If one doesn’t know where they are sailing, no wind is in the right direction.”

Lance Armstrong also said that he does nothing slow. He even sleeps fast. I take that to mean that his rest and relaxation are equally important as his activities. We can learn from this, for it’s important to rest, relax, listen to good music, and attend concerts, clinics and seminars — just what we need to jumpstart a dead- battery attitude.

If we want our students to be motivated, we must remain motivated, for our students are a reflection of us. If we want our students to be passionate about the music that is being performed and rehearsed — we must, first, be passionate about it. The reward for a teacher is seeing the student’s eyes “light-up” and experience the joy of music.

From time to time all of us need to do a little spring cleaning of our teaching to ensure that we may exhibit that all- important ingredient that all successful teachers possess — PASSION.

1. Jeremiah, Dr. David, *Turning Points Magazine and Devotional*, January 2003, p.6.

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