

Program (Re)Building for First-Year Music Educators

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HANDOUT: www.pmhmusic.weebly.com > Clinic Handouts & Materials

Overview

- Strategies for (re)building instrumental & vocal music programs
- First jobs often = challenging situations
- For example . . .



Spanish Fork (Utah) High School Band

Characteristics of a Failing Music Program

- High teacher turnover
- Low numbers
- Weak musicianship
- Little community or administrative support
- Low student morale/motivation
 - Destined to sound poor. No hope.
- Classroom management issues
- Consider the following scenario:



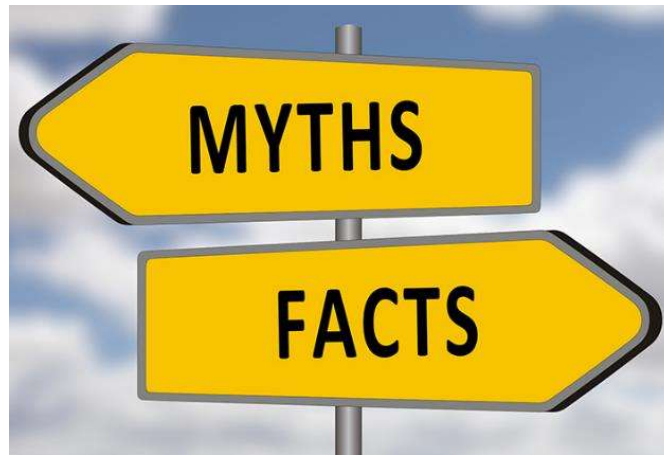
You have just accepted a position as the choral (or band, or orchestra) director at Washington Grove Middle School. The program has deteriorated over the past 10 years, but the administration is supportive and willing to make changes in order to turn the program around. There are only 18 students from grades 6-8 in your concert choir (or band). It is no secret among the school and community that the group does not perform well. In fact, the WGMS Choir (or band) was the only group to receive a div. III rating at the district organizational contest last year. Furthermore, the ensemble fell apart at their winter concert, forcing the director to stop and restart the group. Needless to say, the morale of the ensemble is low, and students are embarrassed to perform. Last year, some members even “ditched” a school assembly in order to avoid performing in front of their peers. To improve the situation, the school board released the last teacher after two years of service. They have brought you in with hopes of building a quality program.

Your Approach to this Situation?

- What does this program need in to become successful?
- What would you like to accomplish in year one?
- What is one strategy you would implement to improve the program?



Five Myths You May Be Told



1. Don't change anything your first year.

- *Reality*: If it's broken you must FIX IT!
- Examples:
 - Uniforms
 - Performance Activities
 - Behavior Expectations
- Don't be afraid to be different – The last teacher may have been fired!!



2. Numbers equal quality –

“The group will sound better when it’s larger”

- *Reality*: The group will sound LOUDER when it’s larger. It won’t sound BETTER until students learn to perform with good fundamentals!
 - Avoid focusing on numbers
 - Quality vs. Quantity



3. Parents and community will react negatively to changing tradition

- *Reality:* Parents and community members simply want their students to be successful.
 - Seek administrative support before implementing changes
 - If possible, replace what you give up
 - If you make changes, be proactive in dealing with the vocal minority



4. “Don’t worry about how it sounds. Most people don’t know the difference anyway”

- *Reality* Everyone can hear a difference when they have something to compare it to. Besides – YOU HAVE TO STAND IN FRONT OF IT!
 - Basics = Tone, pitch, balance, blend
 - Choose appropriate repertoire
 - Best motivation = performing great music well!!!



5. “Don’t smile until Christmas”

- *Reality*: Expectations appropriate for day 1 are appropriate for day 180
 - Set high but reasonable standards
 - Be the same person everyday
 - Students are not the enemy
 - Counteract negative w/ a positive



Program Rebuilding Step by Step

STEP 1 – Assess of the Program

- Find out as much as you can before the interview
- Determine at the interview:
 - Does administration recognize the problem?
 - Are they supportive of change?
 - What is their idea of success?
 - Is this program organized for success?
 - Most valuable assets = Instruction time & access to students
 - Budget, facilities, student abilities, etc. are less important.



Once You Have Accepted a Position:

- Determine:
 - How many students you have (& should have)
 - Voicing/instrumentation of the groups
 - Current performance level
- Consider seeking out **QUALITY** students who may have recently dropped out of the program.



Step 2- Plan your first year

Setting Expectation: The program Handbook

- Create your Course Handbook
 - Inquire as to district or administrator requirements for handbook
 - Add your own classroom and course expectations not covered through the district or from your administrator*
 - Must include: classroom behavior, assignments, syllabus, weighted grading scale (ex. 25% of grade calculated from concert attendances, 25% of grade based on assignments, etc.), compulsory attendance dates (dates of concerts, retreats, extra rehearsals, festivals, etc.), enrichment activity dates (optional), consequences of unfulfilled obligations, syllabus
 - Must be made available to parents before the first day of class
 - Include a document for the student to sign and for the parents to sign

*approval of your additions from your building administrator is understood



STEP 2- Plan your first year [Performances]

- Concerts/Performances
 - Frequency
 - Quarter – on school campus/off school campus
 - Semester – school/elsewhere
 - Formal
 - Students on risers/chairs on stage – Audience seated opposite the performers
- Printed programs
- Repertoire performed in its entirety, no stopping





Step 2- Plan Your Year [Informances]

- Alternative Lower-Pressure Performance Opportunities
- Informal/Educational
- Presentation is informational
 - Parents might sit next to students instead of in the “audience”
 - Teacher may demonstrate a typical rehearsal/warm up before performing repertoire
 - Selected students prepared discuss skills they have learned/worked to be successful in performing this piece
 - Teacher discusses challenges of the repertoire and shares rehearsal techniques used to learn the piece (Discuss their purposes)
 - Discuss/demonstrate outcomes

Step 2 – Plan Your Year-Recruiting/Outreach

- Recruiting – Visit feeder schools
- Community Service Performances
 - Senior Living Communities
 - Nursing Homes
 - Hospital waiting rooms, atriums, lobbies
 - Cancer Treatment facilities
 - Veteran's Groups
 - Civic Groups
 - Libraries
 - ?



STEP 2 – Choosing Repertoire

- Repertoire
 - Quality material
 - I. Is it a good teaching tool?
 - II. Is it the appropriate level of difficulty?
 - III. Is it aesthetically and musically satisfying?
 - Does your repertoire contain variety?
 - Are students experiencing a variety of tempi, articulation, and styles?
 - Research recommended lists that are published
 - Ask mentor teacher or teachers whose program you respect in your area or district for repertoire recommendations





Step 3 – Create a Student-Centered Program

“There is an artist imprisoned in each one of us. Let him loose”

- Bertrand Russell 1967

- What do students want from the program. Why are they there?

“Why do they sing?”

Address these three questions

- 1. Do you see me?
- 2. Do you care about me?
- 3. Who is in charge of this classroom?



Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Step 3 – Create a Student-Centered Program

• Musical Maslow

- **Level 2- Safety**: Holding students to the expectations
- **Level 3 -Love & Belonging**: Making all students feel welcomed and accepted. (Processes includes welcoming new members, senior recognition, alumni contact.)
- **Level 4 – Esteem**: Fostering musical and personal success. Making the experience fun (and meaningful, stimulating, challenging, uplifting, etc.)
- **Level 5 – Self-Actualization**: Helping students reach their full musical and personal potential.

Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

Musical Maslow

Level I – Physiological Needs-eating, drinking, sleeping, breathing

- Almost impossible to help a student who doesn't have these needs met
 - Homeless
 - Abuse
 - Absenteeism
 - Illness

- You cannot fix these problems. You CAN help these students find the resources that they need.



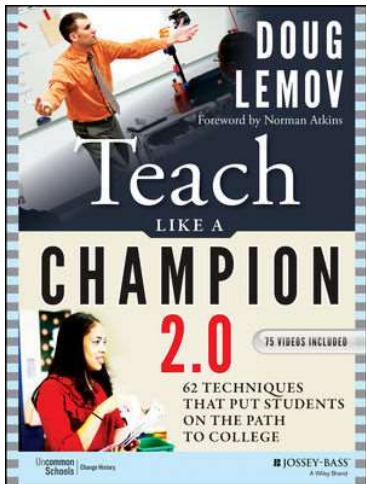
Step 3 – Creating a Student-Centered Program

- Level II

- Safety: Holding students to the expectations
- Classroom management

LeMov – *Teach Like a Champion*

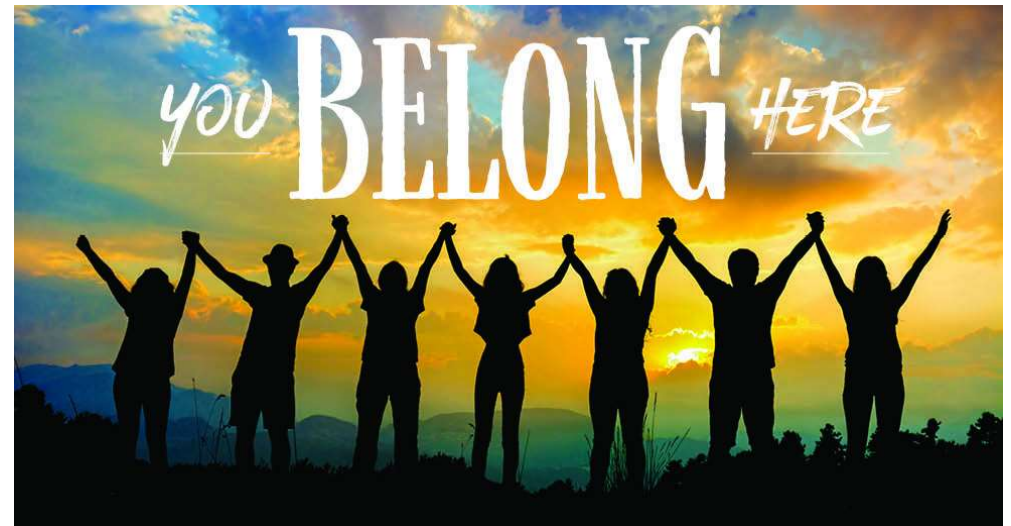
- A. 100 Percent
- B. What To Do
- C. Strong Voice
- D. Do It Again
- E. Sweat the Details
- F. Threshold
- G. No Warnings



Step 3 - Create a Student- Centered Program

- Level II – Love & Belonging
 - Love & Belonging: Making all students feel welcomed and accepted.
 - Showing love-How do we do that?
 - Consider: Different personalities need different kinds of demonstrations of love.

- What do you care about most: the music or the students?

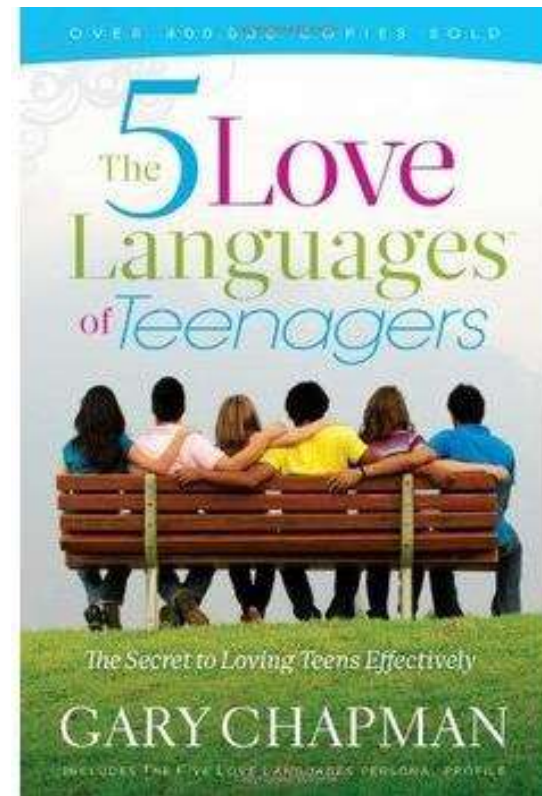


Step3 – Create a Student-Centered Program

The 5 Love Languages

by Gary Chapman

- Words of Affirmation
- Acts of Service
- Receiving Gifts
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch



Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

- Belonging: Making all students feel accepted and welcomed
 - Traditions
 - Welcome
 - Birthdays
 - Mentors
 - Senior Recognition
 - Alumni contact



Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

- **Esteem: Fostering Musical and Personal Success.**

Making the experience fun (and meaningful, stimulating, challenging, uplifting, etc.)

- Consider : Different personalities are motivated by different outcomes

- How do we motivate our students to become their best?



Step 3-Create a Student-Centered Program

The Color Code

(Taylor Hartman, 1987)

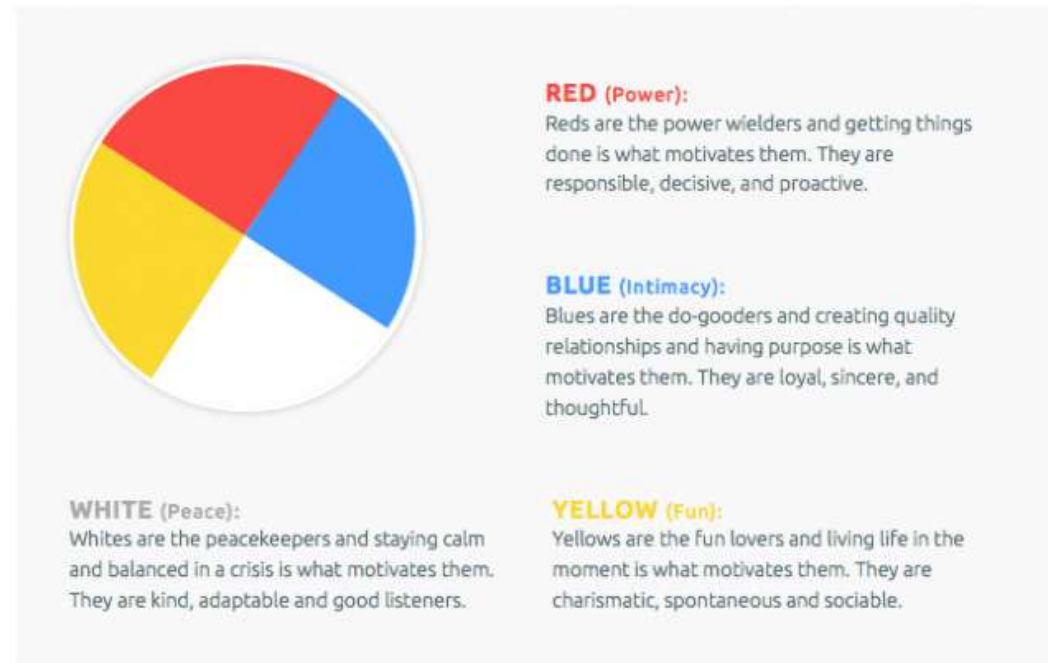
What motivates these students?

Reds-Power

Blues- Intimacy

White- Peace

Yellow - Fun



What motivates whom?

Personality

- Reds
- Blue
- White
- Yellow

Motivators

- Power – our corporate climbers
 - They want to audition for every musical opportunity that gives them exclusivity based on their talent and accomplishments.
- Intimacy - they seek relationships and sharing
 - They want to spend time getting to know others. They love the bonding that comes from performing.
- Peace- avoids conflict, not good at goals
 - Tell them they have to do it. It is required of you if you are in this elite group. (Offer logic)
- Fun - they seek legitimate praise
 - You need to do this because this is where talented people belong

Opportunities for growth (by color)

- Encourage private study (reds and yellows)
- Encourage or require auditions for district festivals , solo and ensemble competitions and exhibitions, participation in extra-curricular musical groups (whites, reds, blues, and yellows)
- Attend events where students can meet and mingle with student musicians from different schools (blues)
- Choose music which is challenging (reds, yellows)
- Keep rehearsals engaging, challenging, fun, scintillating, and organized (reds, blues, yellow, and white)

Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

Self-Actualization: Helping all students reach their full musical and personal potential

- Teach musical literacy not pieces of music!
- Music Theory
- Music History
- Musical Styles



Step 3 - Create a Student-Centered Program

Teach them to be outstanding people not just outstanding musicians

- Respect yourself
 - Be professional in all your performances (dress, deportment)
 - Be prepared
 - Be in attendance
- Respect others
 - Be attentive in class
 - Always do your best (sing your best, play your best)
 - Treat your fellow ensemble members with the dignity they deserve
- Respect property
 - Uniforms
 - Music
 - Instruments



What Did Music Classes Teach You?

1. What you are unable to play/perform/do today is NOT an indication of what you can do tomorrow.
2. Attack a problem (piece of music) in small sections.
3. Work on the parts/sections/problems that are the most difficult.
4. Certain people in your group or team may have strengths that you may not possess. Consequently, they might be able to help you do something better or offer you a strategy that might help you do something better.
5. Conversely, you have certain strengths that can help someone else or that can benefit the group.

Final Thoughts

- Don't be afraid to take over a failing program
- Plan to stay for a while
- Rebuilding a weak program requires as much (if not more) talent, skill, & musicianship as directing a well-developed ensemble
- Read books, articles, join organizations



**THANK
YOU**

