

Analysis of Data on Retention of High School Band Students

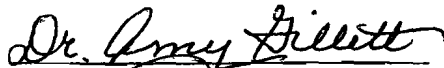
by

Matthew C. Lamb

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree in  
Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



Dr. Amy Gillett  
Research Advisor

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

August 2007

**The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI**

**Author:** Lamb, Matthew C.

**Title:** *Analysis of Data on Retention of High School Band Students*

**Graduate Degree/ Major:** MS in Education

**Research Adviser:** Dr. Amy Gillett

**Month/Year:** August, 2007

**Number of Pages:** 28

**Style Manual Used:** American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> edition

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to analyze available research data on views on retention of high school band students. As a veteran music educator, I see the importance of keeping students involved in instrumental music throughout graduation. There is a great deal of literature available about recruitment and retention of elementary and middle school students, but very little concerning keeping high school students involved in band. After relevant literature was reviewed, factors influencing students staying involved in band was assembled into a handful of categories. Strategies, tips, and techniques in each of these categories were collected via personal interviews with band directors in Western Wisconsin. Data was compiled into a resource guide for use by high school band directors.

Such a resource guide is not intended to be the final word on retention, merely a starting point for a discussion on keeping more students involved in instrumental music.

Interviews on a national scale would surely develop a much larger picture of suggestions for improvement of retention. This study was to discover what strategies are working for veteran instrumental music educators in Western Wisconsin.

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin Stout  
Menomonie, WI

### Acknowledgments

I must thank my loving wife Chandra for all of her support during this project. Through countless nights and weekends that I spent at the computer or the library, she kept everything at home together. I also would like to thank my kids, Rian, Emma, and Charlie to help me keep a smile on my face.

Many thanks also go to Dr. Amy Gillett for offering to be my advisor. Her guidance was always timely and helpful.

Finally, I'd like to thank the many band directors who freely gave of their time to lend tips and strategies from their treasure chest of knowledge to help form this resource guide. All of you inspired me to do this project to keep kids creating magic through music.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
.....	
ABSTRACT.....	ii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
<i>Statement of the Problem</i> .....	12
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	12
<i>Assumptions and limitations</i> .....	12
<i>Definitions</i> .....	13
Chapter II: Literature Review .....	14
Chapter III: Conclusions .....	20
<i>Summary</i> .....	20
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	20
<i>Resource guide</i> .....	21
References.....	29

## Chapter I: Introduction

I am often asked why I chose to become a band director. I ponder this question, but at the heart of the answer is the fact that I had wonderful music experiences as a student. I started playing the baritone horn at age eleven. My mother chose that instrument for me because it was available as a school supplied instrument and did not cost the family any money. I was also promised that I could later switch to the tuba (the instrument that my father played) when I got bigger. In eighth grade I was finally big enough to hold the tuba and life changed from there. Throughout high school my favorite memories involved practicing, performances, band trips, or hanging out with the friends who I had met in band. I went off to college and the world of music got even larger for me. Music opened doors to new experiences. After five long years of undergraduate work, I was ready to take on the challenges of being a band director.

In my first years, success was not immediate by any stretch of the imagination. It was hard for me to understand that not every one of my students loved music the same way that I did. Sure, they enjoyed playing some tunes, but they did not yearn for the experience of discovering new sounds and searching for the next perfect band composition, let alone practicing. I think a lot of first year educators have this experience, regardless of their content area.

In some cases, I would even have students decide that there was no longer space in their life (or at least their class schedule) for band in the upcoming semester. I was distraught over the thought that a student would not want to be part of this experience that I was providing for them. I then fell into the trap of blaming the student. I believed that it was their fault for not being inspired. In other words, students' quitting the activity was

their problem, not mine. Something was wrong with the student, not the experience.

Many teachers, coaches, parents, and employers fall into this trap because it temporarily makes them feel better and allows responsibility to fall on someone else's shoulders.

Eventually I came to the realization that the problem of lack of student motivation and inspiration about music was not the student's problem, it was my problem. I asked myself "what am I doing (or what can I do) to make them feel inspired or motivated?" This is the million dollar question that spawned this wonderful research project. I'm still trying to answer that question everyday.

After beginning my thirteenth year as a band director, I recently asked myself why I'm still a band director. Even though I started this journey because I enjoyed music, I continue to be a band director because I truly enjoy inspiring students to enjoy making and sharing music. This spawned a larger question, "why should music (specifically band) be taught in our schools?"

It sounds like a simple question, but it took me back a bit. I was asking myself to justify what has been at the cornerstone of most of my life: music education. I decided to look at what music education does for students.

### *Why music?*

Most music educators would argue that music should be taught for the sake of teaching music. Music is unique to nearly every culture and that is reason enough to have it taught in our schools. However; we can find more supportive material than simply the beliefs of people who are in the field of music education. According to a leading music advocacy group (MENC, 2002) "Every student in the nation should have an education in the arts" (n.p.). This was a statement from a report the arts from several

national associations including administrators, parents, and school boards. It's a very bold statement and one that many people would support. But recent research can support music education far beyond such a bold statement.

We will now look at how music education helps children have success in society, school, and developing intelligence. If we agree that part of our educational system is to allow children to become productive members of our society, we must explore how music education can benefit building a young member of society. According to MENC (2002, n.p.), the following factoids support music education helping a student have success in society:

- “Secondary students who participated in band or orchestra reported the lowest lifetime and current use of all substances (alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs).”
- “The U.S. Department of Education lists the arts as subjects that college-bound middle and junior high school students should take, stating "Many colleges view participation in the arts and music as a valuable experience that broadens students' understanding and appreciation of the world around them. It is also well known and widely recognized that the arts contribute significantly to children's intellectual development." In addition, one year of Visual and Performing Arts is recommended for college-bound high school students.”
- “The College Board identifies the arts as one of the six basic academic subject areas students should study in order to succeed in college.”
- “The arts create jobs, increase the local tax base, boost tourism, spur growth in related businesses (hotels, restaurants, printing, etc.) and improve the overall quality of life for our cities and towns. On a national level, nonprofit arts



institutions and organizations generate an estimated \$37 billion in economic activity and return \$3.4 billion in federal income taxes to the U.S. Treasury each year.”

We can also find research to support the idea that music education fosters success in other academic areas. MENC (2002, n.p.) reported:

- “According to the ‘No Child Left Behind Act’ the term ‘core academic subjects’ means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.”
- “A study of 237 second grade children used piano keyboard training and newly designed math software to demonstrate improvement in math skills. The group scored 27% higher on proportional math and fractions tests than children that used only the math software.”
- “In an analysis of U.S. Department of Education data on more than 25,000 secondary school students, researchers found that students who report consistent high levels of involvement in instrumental music over the middle and high school years show “significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12.” This observation holds regardless of students’ socio-economic status, and differences in those who are involved with instrumental music vs. those who are not, is more significant over time.”
- “Students with coursework/experience in music performance and music appreciation scored higher on the SAT: students in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal and 41 points higher on the math, and students in

music appreciation scored 63 points higher on verbal and 44 points higher on the math, than did students with no arts participation.”

- “According to statistics compiled by the National Data Resource Center, students who can be classified as “disruptive” (based on factors such as frequent skipping of classes, times in trouble, in-school suspensions, disciplinary reasons given, arrests, and drop-outs) total 12.14 percent of the total school population. In contrast, only 8.08 percent of students involved in music classes meet the same criteria as “disruptive.”
- “Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 showed that music participants received more academic honors and awards than non-music students, and that the percentage of music participants receiving As, As/Bs, and Bs was higher than the percentage of non- participants receiving those grades.”
- “Physician and biologist Lewis Thomas studied the undergraduate majors of medical school applicants. He found that 66% of music majors who applied to medical school were admitted, the highest percentage of any group. 44% of biochemistry majors were admitted.”
- “A study of 811 high school students indicated that the proportion of minority students with a music teacher role-model was significantly larger than for any other discipline. 36% of these students identified music teachers as their role models, as opposed to 28% English teachers, 11% elementary teachers, 7% physical education/sports teachers, 1% principals.”

- “Students who participated in arts programs in selected elementary and middle schools in New York City showed significant increases in self-esteem and thinking skills.”

Research in the last few decades has linked music education to brain development and improved cognitive abilities as supported by the following fact statements from MENC (2002, n.p.):

- “In a study conducted by Dr. Timo Krings, pianists and non-musicians of the same age and sex were required to perform complex sequences of finger movements. Their brains were scanned using a technique called “functional magnetic resource imaging” (fMRI) which detects the activity levels of brain cells. The non-musicians were able to make the movements as correctly as the pianists, but less activity was detected in the pianists’ brains. Thus, compared to non-musicians, the brains of pianists are more efficient at making skilled movements. These findings show that musical training can enhance brain function.”
- “The musician is constantly adjusting decisions on tempo, tone, style, rhythm, phrasing, and feeling--training the brain to become incredibly good at organizing and conducting numerous activities at once. Dedicated practice of this orchestration can have a great payoff for lifelong attention skills, intelligence, and ability for self-knowledge and expression.”
- “A research team exploring the link between music and intelligence reported that music training is far superior to computer instruction in dramatically enhancing

children's abstract reasoning skills, the skills necessary for learning math and science.”

- “Students in two Rhode Island elementary schools who were given an enriched, sequential, skill-building music program showed marked improvement in reading and math skills. Students in the enriched program who had started out behind the control group caught up to statistical equality in reading, and pulled ahead in math.”
- “Researchers at the University of Montreal used various brain imaging techniques to investigate brain activity during musical tasks and found that sight-reading musical scores and playing music both activate regions in all four of the cortex's lobes; and that parts of the cerebellum are also activated during those tasks.”
- “Researchers in Leipzig found that brain scans of musicians showed larger planum temporale (a brain region related to some reading skills) than those of non-musicians. They also found that the musicians had a thicker corpus callosum (the bundle of nerve fibers that connects the two halves of the brain) than those of non-musicians, especially for those who had begun their training before the age of seven.”
- “A University of California (Irvine) study showed that after eight months of keyboard lessons, preschoolers showed a 46% boost in their spatial reasoning IQ.”
- “Researchers found that children given piano lessons significantly improved in their spatial- temporal IQ scores (important for some types of mathematical

reasoning) compared to children who received computer lessons, casual singing, or no lessons.”

- “A McGill University study found that pattern recognition and mental representation scores improved significantly for students given piano instruction over a three-year period. They also found that self-esteem and musical skills measures improved for the students given piano instruction.”
- “Researchers found that lessons on song bells (a standard classroom instrument) led to significant improvement of spatial-temporal scores for three- and four-year-olds.”
- “In the Kindergarten classes of the school district of Kettle Moraine, Wisconsin, children who were given music instruction scored 48 percent higher on spatial-temporal skill tests than those who did not receive music training.”
- “An Auburn University study found significant increases in overall self-concept of at-risk children participating in an arts program that included music, movement, dramatics and art, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale.”

These are all some very compelling facts that support having music in our schools. Certainly results will be different for each student, but studies have shown that music in the school curriculum is not wasted time. Students are getting a lot out of it. I think that former president Bill Clinton summarized the importance of music very well in a quote he gave to MENC (2002, n.p.), he stated “Music is about communication, creativity, and cooperation, and, by studying music in school, students have the

opportunity to build on these skills, enrich their lives, and experience the world from a new perspective.”

*A brief history of bands in the United States.*

Bands have been in existence in our country since the American Revolution. Most of the early bands served a military purpose, often leading armies into battle. According to a band historian (Raessler, 2003, p. 204), the first official military band in the United States was the United States Marine Corps Band established in 1798. The Civil War saw an emergence of bands as a role in the community. Most communities had their own civic band that was used for patriotic ceremonies in the community. There was great use of bands in support of the war effort in World War I. Many of these military musicians returned home to recruit young musicians into bands. Bands began to find their way into the public schools and universities by the 1920's. By the 1940's nearly every school had a band program. The 1920's spawned the band contest. The first national band contest was held in 1923 in Chicago. These were very active activities up until World War II. Following World War II, the band movement began to get greater advocacy as state and national band organizations began to emerge in the country. This gave rise to the music advocacy groups that we have today, such as VH-I Save the Music and Music Educator's National Conference. Bands are part of our heritage and in many cases part of a community's identity.

*Importance of effective retention practices.*

The high school band director is more than just a teacher of music. He or she is responsible for students and a program which may encompass public performances in all twelve months.

According to Raessler (2003), there have always been three issues of concern: “of student recruitment, student retention, and readjustment for program balance” (p. 193). “Since instrumental music enrollments rely heavily on the desire of the students to want to participate, these three topics become absolutely critical and basic to the success of the entire program.” (p. 193)

A recent survey by School Band and Orchestra Magazine (2003) indicated that nearly 60% of band directors surveyed felt that keeping students in the program was more difficult than getting them into the program initially. Many directors cited that recruiting students into the program carries a level of excitement. After the initial excitement is over, it is the teacher’s responsibility to keep the student interested and excited.

Alsobrook (2002) summed up the key reasons for teachers to be concerned about retention, by stating that budgetary factors influencing music instruction are often linked to the number of students in the program. In other words, support is often linked to effective retention of many students.

#### *Challenges facing retention.*

According to a survey by School Band and Orchestra Magazine (2002, n.p.), band directors reported the following reasons for students dropping out of band:

- Time constraints & schedule conflicts
- Lack of interest and/or ability
- Financial reasons

- Social factors
- Move out of district

As part of an ongoing research project to provide program leadership to music educators, Brown (1994, p. 4-5) found that the most important challenges that band directors face in attempting to prevent program weaknesses well:

- Insufficient funding.
- Class schedules conflicting with band.
- Students participating in sports conflicting with band.
- Other school activities conflicting with band.
- Lack of encouragement from parents.
- Inadequate practice facilities.

The band director certainly cannot address every factor that may influence a student's decision to stay in band. It would be very difficult to control the peer group of every student with whom the director interacts with. However, the director can control his or her actions, classroom activities, and communication with students and outside influences.

In conclusion, I found that many other music educators found themselves asking some of the same questions that I had concerning student retention in band. Alsobrook (2002, p. 6) discussed a similar dilemma to my own,

Year after year it's the same old thing. As music educators we work diligently to attract students, bend over backwards to teach them as much as possible, live on very little sleep to keep up with the schedule, spend hours waiting on their rides, and go out of our way to help them in any way that we can. Then it happens. The little



darling for whom we sacrificed so much, the young inspiring musician for whom we had so many plans...QUITS(!)...and without even saying goodbye.

Alsobrook (2002) went on to discuss how he tried many gimmicks early in his career to promote students staying in band. Everything from free days to food. No matter what he did, students still occasionally left the program. Alsobrook certainly paints a very bleak picture. He walked a path that I had also been on earlier in my career.

Hope is offered. Alsobrook (2002) felt that the answer lies in the faces of your students. In other words, if students are getting out of band what they need (or want), they will never question leaving the program.

#### *Statement of the problem*

This study will explore tips, techniques, and strategies that band directors can implement to improve or maintain retention of students in high school band programs. A resource guide was created for WI band directors through a comprehensive review of the literature during Spring 2007.

#### *Research Questions*

This study will focus on the following research questions:

1. What are factors that influence students staying in band?
2. What are techniques or tips that a band director can use to encourage students to continue participating in band?

#### *Assumptions and limitations*

This study assumes that all band programs offer similar offerings such as marching band, pep band, concert band, jazz band, and solo and ensemble experiences.

The limitation of the study is that each suggestion offered may not fit the unique situation of each band program.

### *Definitions*

For clarity, these terms are defined for the reader:

MENC refers to the Music Educator's National Conference a national organization for music educators.

Retention refers to students enrolled in the band program continuing to stay enrolled in the program throughout their high school career.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will take a look at available literature that is relevant to the many components of retention of high school band students.

### *Director traits and daily classroom activities.*

The director must first be a great leader of people, specifically the students of which he or she is in charge. According to Roberts (1990), leadership is the privilege to have the responsibility to direct the actions of others in carrying out the purposes of the organization. I cannot think of any greater privilege than helping mold today's youth through music.

Raessler (2003, p. 7) stated that "the following traits relate directly to the music educator who demonstrates good leadership qualities in order to build program excellence and cohesiveness and to effect change. A leader in music education will need to:

- Develop a community-minded public relations and service image.
- Possess a deep aesthetic and creative soul that will command artistic respect from students, colleagues, and superiors.
- Possess the ability to establish an exemplary model of musicianship in both teaching and performance.
- Possess the ability to sort out the smaller, incidental problems before they become major problems.
- Demonstrate organizational strength.
- In the pursuit of musical excellence, steer clear of a perfectionist mentality.
- Be careful not to take issues personally.

- Always do your best.

These are all traits that can be developed in an individual, and are the basis of a director's personality.”

Dr. Charles Menghini (personal e-mail, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004) felt that band programs that are led by directors who have the following traits will provide a high quality experience for their students:

- Directors must be good musicians.
- Directors must put others before themselves.
- Directors must study and perform quality literature.

Director traits do not necessarily translate into director personality. There are many successful band programs in which director personalities differ a great deal from program to program. Controllable traits are what are important.

#### *Community and school relations.*

This area seems to be an underestimated component of retention. If the community and the school community view band as a positive and fun group, students will be more likely to want to be part of the band. If administration and the guidance department see the importance of the program, they will make it easier for students to avoid schedule conflicts and possibly find additional funding for the program. If students have a positive support base, they are more likely to be encouraged to stay in the program.

#### *Parent relations.*

According to Lautzenheiser and Menghini (2000),

Music educators must accept the responsibility for recruitment and retention.

Research reveals that the vast majority of parents feel that music is an important part of their child's education, but for some reasons some students quit along the way. With frequent communication directors can ally themselves with parents to support continued study of music. (p. 3)

The Music Achievement Council (2006) reported:

The three complaints most often leveled at directors are ineffective management, poor communications, and lack of enthusiasm. All three converge in the challenge of getting parents involved. First, you must organize them; then you must communicate with them, and finally you must rouse them into action. (p. 3)

The Council also reported four reasons for students dropping out of band that are directly linked to parents:

- Poor home environment.
- Parents take little time with their children or offer little, if any, encouragement.
- No suitable area, free from distractions, for practicing.
- Parents feel that their obligation ends when they rent or buy an instrument for their child.

The band director may not be able to address every issue with a student's home life, but effective communication may assist in enlisting much needed help from parents.

Alsobrook (2002) stated "thriving music programs almost always have a tremendous amount of parental involvement" (p. 43). Here are a few key suggestions for keeping this vital line of support active and eager to help:

- Communicate early and often with parents. Make it a priority to frequently share news about what and how their children are doing through newsletters, phone calls, and e-mails.
- Schedule short parent meetings in conjunction with concerts that focus on ways they can encourage their children. Let them know they have made a wise investment and always reinforce the values of formal musical training.
- Provide parents with plenty of opportunities to get involved. Stress the fact that their involvement enables them to be an active part of their children's lives outside the home.
- Instead of having booster meetings, have parent nights and make sure they last no longer than an hour.
- At the end of each year, give each booster club member a token of your appreciation such as a CD of the group's performances or coffee mugs with the group's logo.
- Establish a web site for your program. This is a great way to provide your parents with information and remember to update it often.

All of the available literature seems to point to effective communication being the cornerstone of building good support from parents of band students.

*Traditions, performances, and trips.*

Traditions of the band program are imperative to keeping students involved in the program throughout high school. Some programs adopt rather unique traditions such as exhibited by an Arkansas high school band that would march through their local Wal-

Mart store following marching band camp (Reely, 1999). Traditions help establish a sense of student pride and belonging.

Performances are what all musicians enjoy doing. The ability to share a piece of music is very exhilarating. Alsobrook (2002) stated:

When planning performances the key is not to schedule too many, or too few. Rehearsal time must be carefully reserved for the teaching and learning of meaningful music-making challenges. When too many performances are planned, genuine musical training often disappears to preparation pressure, or cramming. On the other hand, planning too few performances is not advised either. “Coast time” is in reality free time, or “zero-learning time.” Interest can only be sustained for so long, and running in place until a performance date finally arrives is an open invitation for discipline problems as well as boredom with music making. Finding great music is something that requires considerable attention. On one hand, all of us have our own ideas of what “great” is; musical preference is a very personal thing. On the other hand, the literature presented to the students is the curriculum. Thus, one can only conclude that substantial thought and effort must be given to this task. This takes time and the music-selection process must begin well in advance of the actual learning process. (p. 193)

Alsobrook (2002) offered some suggestions on enhancing performances:

- Program a work that involves a guest soloist.
- Program a work that features a guest narrator, such as an administrator, TV personality, football coach, etc.
- Use a guest conductor.

- Hold a concert in conjunction with an art or craft fair.
- Have a small reception after the concert with refreshments.
- Premiere a student composition.
- Give the concert a theme.
- Hold a benefit concert for a local charity
- Establish your own “signature songs” and perform them on the last concert of the year.
- Create special medleys using short segments of popular and favorite songs.
- Always include student names in your printed programs. Without names the program has little keepsake value.

Trips do not need to be an annual occurrence, but do give students something to look forward to that is an outside of school experience. There is a lot of education that happens on an overnight band trip. Students quickly learn that they must exhibit a great deal of cooperation in order for the group to be successful on such a venture. It is important for any performance trip to have a full schedule of fun and educational activities. Excessive free time equals trouble for students and the director.

In conclusion, students need a steady supply of varied and ambitious performances, trips, and traditions to look forward. This allows them to experience the satisfaction of accomplishment, develop a sense of belonging, and boost the amount of energy they put into band.

All of the available literature suggests that if students have a positive and challenging experience, they will likely continue their membership in high school band.



### Chapter III: Summary, Conclusions, and Resource Guide

#### *Summary.*

This chapter summarizes information gathered from a comprehensive review of literature and research on the topic of retention of students in high school bands. After the summary, conclusions are drawn from the findings of the literature review. The chapter closes with a resource guide of practical hints and suggestions compiled from veteran music educators to improve retention of students in high school bands.

#### *Conclusions.*

This study has very deep meaning to me, as I cherish the experience of teaching each and every one of my students. I am with them when they begin playing their instrument in fifth grade and I am with them as they receive their high school diploma. I invest a lot of time in their musical development, as do they. I make it job one to do everything in my power to encourage them to keep playing even after they leave high school.

All of the directors interviewed hit on the theme that regardless of personality, the director must convey a great deal of enthusiasm about what the students are doing. Alsobrook (2002) spent a great deal of time talking about the gifts that teachers give their students. They are gifts of attention and time. Teachers sometimes lose sight that students have basic needs. If directors incorporate meeting those needs into their band program, the program will blossom. Programs that are built on meeting student needs and desires will have an easy time keeping a healthy population.

I would encourage the National Band Association or another national music organization to expand this study on a national level. It would be interesting to see what works well in other areas of the country.

#### Resource guide.

This resource guide is intended for use by high school band directors who are looking for suggestions on improving retention of high school band students. The resource guide is divided by the four components identified in the literature review. They include: director traits and daily classroom activities, community and school relations, parent relations, and traditions, trips, and performances. It is recommended that directors read through the four components and look for possible suggestions that they could incorporate into their programs.

The available literature shows that students stay in high school band due to having a positive experience. Although not all of the suggestions have to do with a student dropping out of band, all of the suggestions are attempting to create a positive and supported experience for the high school band student. If any of the suggestions may keep a few more students over the years, they will be quite worth the effort.

Although the study's primary focus was on band, orchestra and choir directors may find some of the suggestions useable in their programs.

#### *Director traits and daily classroom activities.*

This section identifies some areas that the director can control concerning his or her actions and planning for daily activities with students. This should not be confused with personality. Directors of all personalities can have effective retention practices.

Students who feel cared for and have a positive and challenging experience are more likely to stay involved in band throughout their high school career.

- Directors should take a personal interest in students in and out of class.
- Directors should be highly organized, this includes organization of the physical space.
- Vary the class. High school students do not like to do the same thing everyday.
- Strive everyday to capture your students' interest.
- Express to students that it is important for you to expose them to great works of music simply for the sake of learning.
- Allow for small ensemble time during daily rehearsals each week. Students like the change of pace and the chance perform in a different group.
- Directors must show students that they value their contribution to the group.
- Greet each student everyday.
- Every year will be different. Directors must respond to change in the students.
- Talk to the students about what you do on your own time away from band.
- Don't take everything so seriously. Pick your battles.
- Establish eye contact with each student everyday.
- When making podium cues, don't always cue the first chair players.
- Directors must vary where they are in the room during rehearsal.
- Directors must make each rehearsal "musically meaningful" for the student.
- Use individual and group lessons as a chance to build rapport with students.
- Directors must convey clear expectations.
- Directors must look at the program in a creative sense.

- Directors must keep their life in balance.
- Rehearsals should be varied.
- Involve students in daily procedures, such as set up and music distribution. It promotes leadership, ownership, and responsibility.
- Daily warm up should be meaningful and ritualistic.
- Directors must exhibit that they are also enjoying what they are doing.
- Directors must vary his/her teaching style. This allows for all learning styles.
- Rehearsal cannot have downtime. It must have forward motion to the lesson.
- Directors must freely admit when he or she has made a mistake or is wrong.

#### *Community and school relations.*

This section offers suggestions on building support among the community members, students, and staff. When students are supported by people outside of the band program, they are more likely to continue involvement.

- Check with your local university about possible performances at college athletic events.
- Make sure that your band events are published on the school district calendar that comes out at the beginning of the year. These calendars often go to every district resident.
- Don't turn down community events, try to schedule them in advance. An annual performance for a community group may turn into an annual donation to the band program.
- Directors must convey their needs to improve the program.
- Always perform in your home parade.

- Enlist the help of your art department to make posters for upcoming concerts and band events.
- Get to know people in the community.
- Encourage guidance department to build schedule around band.
- Get calendars of events to guidance and administration.
- Verbally recognize the support of administration at performances.
- Be visible in the community and the school.
- Solo & ensemble assembly for the school.
- Talk up the pep band.
- Work for the “3<sup>rd</sup> option” with student scheduling conflicts. Bending over backwards for one semester may be the difference in keeping some students.
- Insist that all classes scheduled at the same time as band are a multiple section offerings, and be especially cautious of foreign language offerings.
- Never perform something that isn’t going to be well received by your audience.
- Pep band at athletic events may be your chance to build support from members of the community who do not attend other music functions.
- Don’t be afraid to ask community organizations for financial contributions for treats and band scholarships.
- Recruit soloists and small ensembles to perform at area senior citizen’s centers or nursing homes. This is also a great way to get your students a little extra solo & ensemble time.
- Stress to the community the quality of your students.
- Keep open communication with administration.

- Be proactive in communication with administration. Be clear with your program's needs, but not out of line.
- Educate and work with guidance and administration to avoid scheduling conflicts with band. It is especially important to avoid scheduling singletons the same period as band.
- Offer to be on any committee involving the scheduling process.
- Have small ensembles that can easily be available to perform at civic functions.
- Offer to provide bugler or trumpeter to the local veteran's group for veteran's funerals.
- Be aware of trends concerning scheduling. Stay informed.
- Let others know how many extra hours you put in.
- If the community respects the band program, the administration will see that.
- Start a band website. Your students will probably be able to help you out with this. If your district has a website, make sure that the band has a page on it.

#### *Parent relations.*

This section offers suggestions for making positive communication with parents.

Parents are often the deciding factor in a student staying in band.

- Parents should always hear good news about their child directly from the director.
- End every conversation with parents by thanking them and complimenting them on being good parents.
- Quarterly newsletter informing parents of what is going on in class. Mail them if possible, that way things are guaranteed to get into the hands of the parents.
- Stress to parents that band involvement improves their child's overall learning.

- Remember that each parent typically views their child as the most important aspect of their life.
- Spend plenty of time getting to know families at conferences.
- Consider a mandatory parents meeting to start out the year. This gives you the chance to get to everyone and inform the parents of the year to come.
- Set a goal to have contact with five different parents per week. That is one a day. It can be as simple as a postcard or e-mail.
- When problems arise with students, communicate with parents immediately.
- When possible, try to mail home important paperwork such as band trip forms. High school students often lose things in their lockers and your information never gets communicated home.
- Look into educational web posting to help students with home practice.
- Send out invitations to parent/teacher conferences.
- Every student gets a quarterly progress report sent home.
- Send home a monthly newsletter informing parents of class events.
- Develop a phone tree of band parents who can quickly spread the news of time changes or upcoming meetings or performances.
- Parent e-mail chain.

*Traditions, performances, and trips.*

Unique opportunities are available to band students that they may not get in other areas. These suggestions offer ways to promote those unique experiences that may keep more students in the high school band program.

- Set up a schedule of performance trips. They do not have to be an annual occurrence, but students look forward to the next big trip.
- Keep informed of what type of music the students are listening to.
- Establish activities that are special for seniors, like receiving a flower at their last parade or concert.
- Contact nearby Metropolitan Orchestra for special student performances and pricing. Exposing students to professional musicians is a great motivational tool.
- Hold an annual alumni pep band night. Try to enlist alumni from each decade to help organize the event.
- Schedule a pep band concert, the kids will love it.
- Allow students to help set the pep band schedule and select music.
- Accept student input on selecting music, you may guide the process by selecting several options from which they can choose.
- Be very creative when scheduling performances. It will frustrate students if the performances are too close to each other.
- End of the year awards for all classes based on the activities that the students have done throughout the year.
- Take your pep band on the road for a few games. Treat everyone to ice cream.
- Have your performance tours on a two or a four year cycle so each class gets an equal shot at going on a band trip.
- Look into performing at your area professional sporting event. Many teams and stadiums already offer special programs for bands.



- Plan a mystery band trip. Make all the arrangements, but only tell the students what time they need to report for departure and what they need to bring. This can be as simple as performing at some grade schools and having a fast food lunch. Make sure that you have pre-arranged for parental consent.
- Have a costume concert. Fall concerts around Halloween make for a perfect choice.
- Have theme nights for pep band. Suggestions such as dress like your favorite teacher or weird hat night.

## References

- Alsobrook, J. (2002). *Pathways a guide for energizing & enriching band, orchestra, & choral programs*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications Inc.
- Brown, J. (1994). *Opportunities and solutions for instrumental programs*. Elkhart, IN: Gemeinhardt Corporation.
- Lautzenheiser, T., & Menghini, C. (2000). *Band director's communication kit*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation.
- MENC – The National Association for Music Education. (2002). *Music education facts and figures 2002*. Retrieved July 12, 2005, from: [www.menc.org/](http://www.menc.org/)
- Music Achievement Council. (2006). *A practical guide for recruitment and retention*. Carlsbad, CA: Music Achievement Council.
- Raessler, K. (2003). *Aspiring to excel leadership initiatives for music educators*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications Inc
- Reely, T. (1999). *Move over mr. holland*. Paragould, AK: Trey Reely.
- School Band and Orchestra Magazine. (2002, April). SBO survey: Recruitment and retention. *School Band and Orchestra Magazine*. Retrieved January 31, 2005, from: [www.sbomagazine.com/sbomag/apr02/survey.html/](http://www.sbomagazine.com/sbomag/apr02/survey.html/)