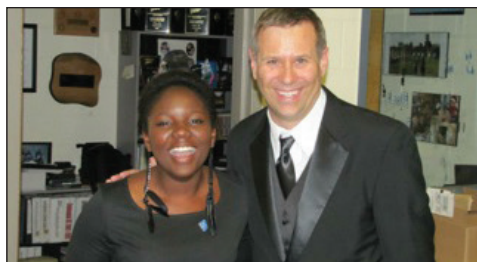




From: Stony Black, Director of Bands
Air Academy High School
Colorado Springs, Colorado
ABC 2007 Graduate

Looking back, I suppose the greatest moment of success would have been when I realized that I loved teaching as much as performing. I was a graduate performance major at The University of Northern Colorado when I decided to take a semester off. During that time, I began working as a percussion instructor for my former band director, and he allowed me to take over a class for a quarter. It is hard to explain what happened, but I became addicted to that feeling you get when you help a student “figure it out” for the first time. It was in that moment I realized the incredible satisfaction of teaching. Like many others, I have had some incredible experiences on stage, but none compare to when I stand in front of an ensemble and share those moments with my students. From that point forward, I have continued to believe that success as a band director is defined by that relationship you have with your students.

In addition to focusing on the success of your students, I believe the following two factors are also important to achieving success. First, I constantly remind myself to focus less on the number of hours I’m working and remember what I get to do each day. This small shift in perspective has made a huge difference for me. Second, I always seek out new and novel ways to learn and make music education more interesting by attending conferences, going to Midwest, attending American Band College, attending BOA Grand Nationals, going to a jazz conference, or just hanging out with other band directors. I do believe that great teachers never stop learning.



Stony with student Anisha Rush after concert.

From: Matthew Arau
Associate Director of Bands
Lawrence University Conservatory
Appleton, Wisconsin
ABC 2003 Graduate

I remember looking at a poster in my bedroom every day while growing up in Sacramento, California that had a photograph of a cliff diver soaring above the ocean with a caption that read, “You only live once, but if you live right once is enough.” As a music teacher, I have really taken that to heart. Early in my career in Loveland, Colorado, while teaching at Walt Clark Middle School, I created a by-audition honor band of mixed-based grouping for my students that rehearsed one to two times a week in the evening to create something special for my students to strive for. We invited local

college students and professors to come in weekly and lead sectionals and give clinics. The Walt Clark Honor Band later performed at the Colorado Music Educators Convention.

After a few years of teaching, I found out about the American Band College and took a leap of faith, and the experience forever changed my life. ABC raised my standards, level of artistry and challenged me to connect at a higher level. In 2005, when Loveland High School opened up, rather than shying away from applying for the position, since I had very limited marching experience.. A few years later we won the Colorado State Marching Band Championship and the Bands of America San Antonio Class AA Championship.

When I decided to apply for doctoral studies in conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder, other directors cautioned me about the risk of giving up my secure high school job for the possibility that I would eventually get a college position. I wouldn’t let go of my dreams, however, to continue to grow as a musician. This past April, I received an offer to be the Music Education Department Chair and Associate Director of Bands at my alma mater, Lawrence University.

When I look back at my career, I think of what Allan McMurray, shared with me, “Leap! And the net will appear.” If you really want something, have faith and go for it. When you are passionate about music and students, and you are willing to be vulnerable and open to possibilities, challenges become opportunities and the sky is the limit.



Matthew Arau with the Loveland High School Band after winning state.



The Purdue University Marching Band in rehearsal with Matt Conaway.

From: Matt Conaway
Assistant Professor of Bands
Purdue University
ABC 2010 Graduate

The best moment of my career is the day I realized that my job wasn't to teach MUSIC to people, but to teach PEOPLE life skills through the art and discipline of music.

In April of 2009, one of my best senior trumpet players stayed late at the band room after we returned from a concert festival performance. I had started listening to judges' comments almost immediately and reliving that performance. The student stayed and listened as well, offering some occasional feedback to the tapes, but mostly just sitting quietly. When I finished the last tape and said that it was time to close up, he broke down crying, and managed to explain to me that his grandfather (an Army veteran) had just passed away. He had been asked to honor his grandfather at the funeral by playing Taps, but didn't think he could get through it. We had just spent almost an hour and a half listening to comment tapes from some senseless contest, and I didn't once even think that he might have been staying around to talk, not to listen.

I pulled out a trumpet, and we went over the musical side of it first. We then spent much more time talking about how his

performance of Taps would help bring closure to his family on their loss; how there is no greater gift for a trumpet player to give than providing this service; how there is a mindset in performing that can capture and convey great emotion while the performer maintains poise; how he could use his skill and craft to have a final emotional connection to his grandfather.

By the time he left, he felt confident that he could get through it, and thanked me for spending time with him. He had been in my classroom for seven years, but that lesson in the band room on a random Friday evening in April was more meaningful than anything I had taught him prior. It also taught me more than anything I learned in any class in my entire life.

The realization that I was out to teach PEOPLE (and not MUSIC) radically changed my approach to teaching, and made me a much happier and dedicated educator.

From: Scott MacLennan
Music Director
Lord Byng Secondary School and
Music Education Faculty
University of British Columbia
ABC 2010 Graduate

I think the key to success involves seeking out opportunities to learn from the most gifted experts you can find in your field.

For me, that began with master conductors Morihiro Okabe, Ken Hsieh, and Wayne Toews, at the International Saito Conducting Workshop in 2007. Being in the presence of Professor Okabe and watching him work was life changing. That experience convinced me to complete a MMus in conducting at the American Band College. At ABC, I had the pleasure of working with a variety of inspirational directors such as Ralph Hultgren, Anthony Maiello, Robert Ponto, and Bruce Dinkins. I've been blessed with the generosity of time that my mentors, Dr. Tim, Peter Stigings, Wayne Toews, Max McKee, and Scott Goble, gave me, creating opportunities for me to discover who I could become as a musician/educator/conductor/leader/human being.

Music educators have the greatest job on the planet. We get to work with the youth of today and make a significant positive difference in their lives. I believe that learning is a life long pursuit for all of us and that we need to be open to what our students teach us as much as what we teach them. It is this process of working together with fellow musicians in this personal and group discovery of who we can become that gives music its true worth.



Scott MacLennan Vancouver, BC. director.



From: Brian Peter
Director of Bands
Westlake High School
Westlake Village, California
ABC 2008 Graduate

If you know me, you know I ask a LOT of questions, I always have. My favorites are “why?” and “how?” Not in a challenging way, but in a curious, respectful and educational way. I do everything I can to find people who are the best at what they do and pick their brains. I have always made it a point to get “behind the scenes” of great music programs and successful companies/corporations to see how they work, and study why they do what they do. Simply stated, my educational style and philosophies are a mix of my inquisitiveness, my life experiences and my personality.

For example, professional development is principal to my educational philosophy. I have attended The Midwest Clinic every year since 2003, graduated from ABC in 2008 and been on the Blue Devils visual staff since 2000. A lot of my “bag of tricks” are attributed to the individual lessons learned in these top-tier professional environments. These organizations are loaded with people with decades of their own experience, philosophies, personalities, successes, and styles. For me, it is a farm of information waiting to be harvested - you just have to ask! But, there was more to learn when I began to dig deeper and inquire about

why these programs were structured the way they were, how they operated behind the scenes, why they started in the first place, and how they became and remained so successful.

Study everything about your favorite conductor: their gestures, facial expressions, pacing of rehearsals, tone of voice. Study their priorities in rehearsal, the way they inspire, the level of demand they place on the performers, their persistence in getting exactly what they want, etc. Then, run a rehearsal EXACTLY like they would. Do your best impression of them, over and over. Hear their voice, inflections and level of expectation for your group come out of your mouth. Do this with your five favorite conductors. Then, pick your favorite aspects of each, mix them with your personality and style and you are well on your way. Finally, repeat this process with every aspect of your program you can.

From: Lisa Butts
Band Director at Hanford West H.S.
Hanford, California
ABC 1998 Graduate

First, I have to say that my faith in God and his willingness to help me each day in my teaching is the first reason I have been successful as a band director. I also had some great mentors when I began my teaching career in the Tulare City School district. Without the help of Susan Burley and Jim Kusse-row, I would not have made it through my first 3 years of teaching.

Also, being a member of the Tulare Kings Music Educators Association, the California Music Educators Association, The California Band Directors Association, and the California Alliance for Jazz has helped me to connect with many fine educators who were all willing to give suggestions and advice to me on how to be a better teacher.

The most important reason that I have been successful is Max McKee and the American Band College. Being able to experience the clinicians, conductors, and master teachers there was a life changer for me. Also, being able to connect with so many other directors who shared my passion for teaching



Westlake High School Jazz Ensemble at the 2013 Midwest Clinic in Chicago.



The Hanford West Mighty Huskies Marching Band

was a great help. Everything I learned at ABC I still use every day in my classroom. The education I received there was priceless and I still cherish the 3 summers I spent there.

I am also blessed to be able to work with my best friends, Trish Adams and Ruben Amavisca. They make going to work each day fun! Finally, my husband Bill has been a major reason for my success. He is always there for me no matter what and that has also made me the teacher that I am today.

From: Tom Cox

**Band Director at Goshen High School
Goshen, Indiana**

ABC 2006 Graduate

I had always studied my scores as a young band director and done pretty well at contests and festivals. My bands were pretty good. But no matter how hard I worked, my bands had never made State Concert Band Finals in Indiana. I guess you could say I was victim of not knowing what I didn't know.

This changed when I entered the program at the American Band College. I quickly learned that I really did not know my pitch tendencies for all of

the instruments, or what I needed to do to make the chords really "ring". After graduating from ABC I decided to really dig in to my scores and mark the chords, as well as the key intonation areas for each instrument. The use of drones for matching chord tones, singing in rehearsals and the use of The Tonal Energy App has been an amazing tool to show aurally the difference between being in tune on your individual note and being in tune within the chord.

Another area that really helped our ensembles grow was to have them listen to other great ensembles. I realized that in order for my bands to know what

I wanted them to sound like I had to give them aural and visual examples. I would instruct my students to listen to the dark "Midwest" sound that the bands play with at the annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic held every year in Chicago. I kept reinforcing that the dark sound came from fitting your sound inside the tuba and not over playing. Since that time, our ensembles have continued to improve.

I am not sure I have a defining moment that my bands went from good to great, but I do know that it takes time and a great team. The attention to intonation, tone matching, and listening to other great ensembles have been a process that started in 2006. Since that time, our bands have been selected for the Indiana State Concert Band Finals, been marching band State Runner-up twice and won our first ever BOA Marching Band Regional Championship.

The Goshen Bands are team taught by Josh Kaufman, Max Mault and Tom Cox.



The combined bands during a Christmas concert at Goshen High School, Indiana



From: Jonathan Grantham
Director of Bands
Amador Valley High School
Pleasanton, California
ABC 2013 Graduate

In 2007 I was at a crossroads and found myself contemplating a move to collegiate level music education. Many of my friends were beginning Master's and PhD programs and I was feeling some anxiety about remaining in the position of being "just" a high school band director. I wondered if I had ladders to climb and where those ladders might take me! In the spring of that year I sight-read Frank Ticheli's "An American Elegy" with my wind ensemble. It was the first time reading the piece for myself and my students. As I was explaining the very powerful story behind the composition, I found the attentiveness in the room to be unlike anything I had experienced up to that point in

my career. As soon as I dropped the downbeat and sensed the respect and care these high school musicians were taking in their first read I knew something very special was happening...and not just for the students. It was in that moment things clicked for me. I knew I was where I was supposed to be, doing what I was supposed to be doing. I was climbing the only ladder that I was meant to climb and from that day on I focused my energy on being the very best band director I could be for my students.

I am a proud graduate of the American Band College and would like to thank all involved in creating that other "a-ha" moment for me as a band director. My three summers at ABC provided me with the springboard to refocus my teaching, reignite my passion, and give me the tools to realize new dreams and goals for my students. Having per-

formed with my band at The Midwest Clinic in 2013, I recognize the very direct role that ABC had in making that performance possible. Though three summers seems like a long "a-ha" in the making, in this instance, hindsight offers a 20/20 perspective on the powerful influence of the ABC experience.

Sometimes when you shoot for the stars you get to touch them!

From: Marc Whitlock
Band Director Discovery Middle School
Canton, Michigan
ABC 2010 Graduate



Marc Whitlock, Canton, Michigan Director

We all face the choices we know are big, that are difficult, and we usually know these choices will have a profound impact on our life. I would like to share a few of these personal moments with you in the hopes that my failures and successes will help when you are in similar situations.

One of the first "moments of choice" we make is about accepting a job. I actually turned down my first job offer as the district did not seem invested in music education. I worried if I had made the correct choice. Then it happened. I was on the road teaching drum corps and I ran into Greg Bimm, Director of Bands for Marian Catholic High School in Illinois, one of the best concert and marching programs in the country. He mentioned that the assistant director position had just opened up. I ended up getting the job where I learned to write wind music, write percussion music, write drill, arrange for concert band, and learn how to musi-



Amador Valley High School performing at the 2013 Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic.

cally teach a concert band from a master teacher. Years later I had become the Director of Bands at the Plymouth-Canton Educational Park (PCEP). My wife and I wished to have another child and I was blessed by the birth of our daughter Macaylah. She was born with Down Syndrome, is completely deaf, had a heart condition called Tetralogy of Fallot, and later developed a rare form of Leukemia. I realized that I had another moment of choice to face, and that I needed to step away from PCEP and its rigors so that the students had someone who could handle the 10-14 hour days and that I could be a better father and husband to my family.

I chose to take an open band director position at Discovery Middle School in Canton! Then reality hit: I have to start beginners! I enrolled in the week-long Music For All Summer Symposium Middle School Director track hosted by Robert. W. Smith. I began taking woodwind and percussion lessons to be more proficient on these instruments from the beginning (and I still do). After a long period of chemotherapy and experimental medical protocols, Macaylah was diagnosed “cancer free,” and it is still the greatest sound I have ever known. I then rigorously pursued graduate school options and wisely chose the American Band College. Besides the amazing staff utilized each year, the practical applications projects that I created benefit me every day in my classroom.

So what is the key to success as a band director? Many would think it would be based on winning but I assure you, it is not. The answer to what is the key to success as a band director is when you “face the moment of choice,” do what is right, not what is easy, and always remember that it is our choices and actions that define us, not our words.



Mississippi State University Wind Ensemble, Elva Kay Lance, Conductor

From: Elva Kay Lance
Director of Bands
Mississippi State University
ABC 1994 Graduate

My first “ah-ha” moment occurred when I was a young euphonium student attending a band clinic. Raymond Young, who later became my euphonium teacher and long-time mentor, first exposed me to the idea of assigning syllables to aid in rhythmic understanding. I later understood that to be mnemonics – but at the time, I didn’t know what it was, but I got it. I never forgot how he verbalized rhythms, and I have used that method with all of my young students throughout my career.

My next “ah-ha” moment was also as a student musician in a clinic with Arnold Gabriel as conductor. When he cued the horns on H. Owen Reed’s La Fiesta Mexicana, all of us in the ensemble seemed to desperately wish we could be a part of that line. I was inspired then and still am when watching a master teacher in our profession.

A big “hmmm...” moment for me occurred when, as a college student, I

was serving as an assistant in the balcony at the concert festival hosted on our campus. Dr. Wilbur “Bodie” Hinton, then Director of Bands at Auburn University, was serving as one of the adjudicators. As I collected the conductor’s scores and rating sheets, he said to me, “Now sit right down here. If that were your band, what would you say to them?” Hmmm...

So I began sitting a few rows away to listen to what he and others said about the various performances. From that point on, I began to listen more critically in rehearsals, in lessons, in recitals, and in concerts. I began to process my musical experiences in a different way. My classes began to have new meaning and I was much more engaged and aware of all of the components of the music. This approach to listening helped me learn to identify the elements of the music, assess the performance, and craft a rehearsal plan. Over the years, this critical listening also helped me learn to enjoy music in a totally different way.