

It's Back to School

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Ah, yes. . .the summer months are long gone and "the bell tolls" for all of us to "get back in the saddle." (Many of you never left it!!) Here are some little hints which should be remembered when mentally preparing yourself to "Strike Up the Band." These may also get everything in perspective and launch this school year as THE BEST EVER!

1. Let's remind ourselves that WE HAVE THE BEST STUDENTS in the school. They choose to be in the band and represent the highly motivated, caring young person in today's society.
2. A ROLE MODEL (That's us!) is three to four times more powerful than the information being used in a lesson plan. These band students are very keen to your own behavior patterns. Constantly check yourself and make sure that your lifestyle and personal discipline habits are congruent with what you expect of/from them. (Self-evaluation must be constant; it leads to constant self-improvement.)
3. MAINTAIN BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE. We all know it takes an incredible amount of long hours and hard work, but be certain you are sensible about your pattern of living. Mind, body, spirit: They all have to be intact or we lose efficiency in every area. (Translated: Continue to learn, stay in good health, and be true to your beliefs and convictions.)
4. FAILURE IS NOT BAD when seen in the appropriate context. Use failure (which is only a label) as an opportunity to correct and improve. The very term, failure, insinuates: No good, incapable, invalid, and can often lead to quitting as a solution. Failure is a mistake and allows us the chance to rework the situation for a new solution.
5. DISCIPLINE IS AN EXPRESSION OF CARE (LOVE). Young people all want to be great. (The band students are at the front of the pack.) It is important that we maintain a forward motion for the group and allow them to see the benefits of a WE-US philosophy, as opposed to the I-ME philosophy which violates all forms of teamwork. To accomplish this, it will take a sense of group discipline which will translate (if taught appropriately) into self-discipline.
6. CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY in your work. B.F. Skinner (the noted psychologist, philosopher, educator) said, "In the presence of JOY, students learn 3 to 5 times faster than in a negative setting. When joy is absent, the potential to learn falls to a horrifying minimum." (We often confuse "discipline" with "stern dictatorship.") It is important to "be yourself" and be content with your profession. Negative attitudes are damaging and contagious. Set the example for how you want the group's attitude to be.
7. TEACH PERSISTENCE by being persistent. Even though we all wish they would go on and play their horns, we know we will not get 100% participation in that area; however, the students will go on and be contributing members of society. To be a success at anything, they will need to be persistent. Let's make sure we see

- them graduate with that personality quality stamped on their diploma via their musical experiences.
8. **GREAT TEACHERS ARE GREAT COMMUNICATORS.** Take the time to "know the students." If there is a discipline problem, it usually is not because of the band. Rather than use rehearsal time to "make an example" of a confused, upset student, take some time after rehearsal to find out WHY this instance happened. (Surgery isn't always the answer; a little T.L.C. can go a long, long way. Surgery = last resort.)
 9. **SUPPORT OUR PROFESSION.** We need to be loyal to our discipline. Go to conventions, workshops, seminars, etc. Share your findings with colleagues and those young teachers who so desperately need the wisdom of your own experiences. Critics are a dime a dozen; let's join together and continue to promote music education in our schools. We need each other. We need you!!
 10. **COOPERATE.** Whether it is within your own school faculty, booster organization, community affairs, etc. **CONFLICT** is certain to bring a halt to forward progress. Look past your ego and do what is **RIGHT** for the program. .
.the **TOTAL PROGRAM**

It's easy to sit and read (or write) this list of very "idealistic" guidelines. The real mark of the teacher of excellence is in the implementation of them in the day to day rehearsals, meetings, performances, and problem solving. Let's make sure we **ACT** instead of **REACT**.

You are making such a positive difference to so many young people via your talents. Put a smile on your face and keep reminding yourself how great it is to be in a country where music is part of the school day. And we need great band directors, like you, to get that group of eager young students in shape for all the upcoming performances.

As Carl Jung so brilliantly stated, "From the beginning I had a sense of destiny, as though my life was assigned to me by fate and had to be fulfilled. This gave me an inner security, and, though I could never prove it to myself, it proved itself to me. I did not have this certainty; it had me." It's back to school. . .Strike Up the Band!