

BAND AIDS

BAND AIDS
A Program Guide for the
New Band Director

Thomas J. Dust
Laura Jane Dust



Universal-Publishers
Boca Raton

Band Aids: A Program Guide for the New Band Director

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Foreword

The dynamic of music education is ever changing and evolving as curricula adjust to meet changing local, regional and national standards, technological advancements, and the role of music programs in schools and communities. Dr. Tom and Laura Dust bring sixty years of combined teaching experience in the private studio, public school, and post-secondary levels. This collective experience has resulted in producing one of the most common sense and practical manuals for successful instrumental music programs that I have ever read.

Every bit of information included in this text is relevant and helpful for the new instrumental music educator. It is also an outstanding resource for experienced directors looking for new strategies and approaches. Topics including; classroom management, formulation of lesson plans, suggested beginning band instrumentations and repertoire levels, assessment, band parents, concert preparation and organization, jazz band and concert band primers, first year advice, grading scales, planning guides, sample letters to students and parents, budget categories, band trips, and standard rehearsal format are just a few of the important issues presented and discussed. When a young teacher struggles in the classroom, most often it is related to difficulty with classroom management and organizational skills. Our post-secondary curricula are very strong in developing content knowledge among our students. This text fills a critical gap by providing a hands-on and practical guide for success in the instrumental environment.

This valuable text is filled with relevant and practical information and is unique and sensible in its format. Each chapter includes a “TIP” section outlined in block form highlighting important points and suggestions. “Key Points” providing a recap of salient information are included at the end of each chapter. This text is designed to be helpful, practical and brief in style, format, and presentation. It is often said that the first years of teaching are typically the most important and illuminating. This practical and valuable text is a defining document that all college and university preparatory programs for music education should require for their courses related to successful school music administration.

Alan D. LaFave, DMA

Preface

This book is meant for new school band directors and those of more experience who are being challenged by the administrative aspects of managing a school band program.

The first year of teaching school band is a challenging one. Those of you who were fortunate enough to be, as a student, part of an excellent school band program have a good model to follow – although as a student you were not likely perceptive of many of the administrative aspects of the band program. Regardless of the level of previous exposure you have had to school band programs, it is possible that if you have reasonable people skills and good music skills, you can develop the administrative knowledge and skill required to run an excellent school music program.

This book is about helping you develop the administrative knowledge and skill you need to manage a successful school band program. This book is not about instrumental techniques, conducting, music analysis, or any of the other musical topics that are typically studied as part of the curriculum in university band teacher education programs. The authors assume that you, the reader, have a good grasp of music topics and have good music skills.

We assume that you have pedagogical content knowledge, that you have had instruction on how to teach and assess cognitive music concepts and psychomotor skills. We want to help you with the management aspects of operating your first school band program. How do you organize the school year? What about a band parents' organization? Band trips and band camps? These are among the topics in this book. If you are a first year band teacher or a more experienced band teacher challenged by the administrative aspects of your job – then read on, this book is for you.

Achieving balanced instrumentation is an important component of developing a band program that is able to provide students with a satisfying musical experience. The ability of a band to perform the standard band repertoire is dependant on having a balanced complement of instruments. The authors have provided detailed information on how programs with as few as 14 beginners a year can achieve balanced instrumentation in a two-level junior or middle school program.

Music Education

“The premise is that the essential nature and value of music education are determined by the nature and value of the art of music.”

- Bennett Reimer

These words of Bennett Reimer encapsulate my orientation toward the teaching of music, whether with secondary school students, university students, or professional musicians. My teaching of music educators also derives from this position, for without music, there is no music education.

Those of us who teach music and teach children through the medium of music do so not to grow brains bigger, or to improve achievement scores in math – we teach music to enrich lives by helping others to attain a higher level of perception, and a deeper understanding of one of humankind’s defining practices – music. We teach music because we know that it helps individuals to grow in understanding of themselves and others as the performing of, or listening to, music becomes a tangible expression of one’s inner, emotive life.

Music educators must be musicians. The teaching of music in our schools focuses on the making of music. Music education is about “doing it,” not just about “knowing about it.” The skills that one requires to be a successful school music teacher are acquired starting at an early age. Hours of study and practice must take place in order to develop the integration of technical skills, auditory capacity, and cognitive knowledge required to teach the *art* of music to youth through performance in band and choir. I encourage my music education students to continue their musical development for the duration of their lives – their effectiveness and longevity as school music teachers require it.

Music and music education are the media through which we address the greatest goal in education – the personal development of every student as a “good person.” The concept of “good person” includes not just attaining our personal best, but being committed to the welfare of all – our classmates, our families, and all society. Musical growth and personal growth, as evidenced by respect for self, respect for others, kindness, honesty, high standards, forgiveness, and second chances, are the goals of music education. Good music teachers are more than effective music instructors. Good music teachers believe in the development of the whole person, with music as the medium to effect change.

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The thoughts expressed above are among those that guide my teaching of the secondary music education classes at the University of Alberta. It is my goal to help our music education students come to these same understandings of the interrelatedness of music instruction and personal growth so that their teaching of secondary music students will be more than technical instruction on playing or singing the correct notes and rhythms, or the proper trill fingerings on the Bb clarinet. It is my goal that our graduates teach the *art* of music as they foster the personal development of their students.

“Every child should leave your music classroom a better musician and a better person.”

- Thomas Dust, DME

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Getting a Job

Prepare your résumé and a one-page cover letter addressed to the employer to whom you are applying. Your résumé must be easy to read, so use a plain style. Use white or off-white textured bond paper. Avoid fancy fonts, small font size (less than 11 pt), racecars, geometric shapes, dingbats, and the like. Use headings such as “Work Experience,” “Education,” “Teaching Experience,” and “Honors and Activities.” Include items that show experiences you have had with children/students – camp counselor, youth group leader, Study Buddy program, sectional rehearsal coach, etc. Include items that show you as a team player – ensemble membership, student association member, etc. Include items that show you as a leader – executive member of student association, section leader in concert band, etc.

Bullets provide a brief description of the nature of each item included on your resume. “Music Students’ Association Vice President” could be accompanied by:

- Organized Spring social
- Assisted with development of association bylaws
- Chaired membership committee.

One or two pages are what you need – not more. You may include a list of your references (three will suffice) on a separate page. Several examples of suitable résumé formats and a listing of dynamic action words to use in your résumé can be found in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) on-line publication *A*

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Career Guide for Music Education, 2nd Ed. by Barbara Payne at www.menc.org/careers/view/a-career-guide-for-music-education-2nd-ed.

Solicit letters of reference from persons who will say positive things about your character and your competency. Most school districts want at least one reference from a university instructor with whom you have studied. Music and music education professors and mentor teachers are all good choices. When asking someone for a reference, provide him/her with your résumé – it will be helpful to that person as s/he composes a letter. Do this well in advance of when you plan to begin submitting applications for employment. Do not expect busy individuals to be able to provide a letter on short notice. Do not include mediocre or form letters in your application package.

Get out the word that you are looking for a music teaching position. Think of where potential employers may inquire when they seek a music teacher. Music education and music professors at universities receive many calls and emails requesting leads on teachers. Music industry representatives are frequently among the first to know of positions that may be available in the near future. Teachers and administrators in the school system pass information around about promising prospects. Be sure all of these people know that you have finished your university teacher education program and are actively seeking a teaching position.

Send or deliver your application package to the schools/school districts to which you wish to apply. Many schools/school districts are now accepting only internet application packages, either directly to them, or through a central application service provider (e.g. www.applytoeducation.com). Check the web-site of the schools/school districts you are applying to and if this is the case, submit your application directly to the schools/districts, or open an account with the internet application service and upload your cover letter, résumé and all supporting documentation. Before you know it, you will receive a request to attend an interview!

The Interview

Dress in a conventional manner, as defined by the community that is interviewing you. Dress-up – donning a tie (gentlemen) or a business suit (ladies) is a signal to the interviewers that you are interested in the position and want to make the best impression. Display impeccable hygiene – comb your hair, brush your teeth, and use deodorant.

Appear confident but not cocky. Sit up straight; feet on the floor, keeping your back flat against the chair back – no slouching. Establish eye contact with the interviewers. Use proper grammar and avoid the use of slang, “yes” instead of “yup” or “yah.” Use the name of the interviewer now and again when responding to or asking questions – “Yes Mr. Smith, I spent two years as the leader of my church youth group.” Smile and maintain an energetic tone to your voice – employ inflection. Do not raise the pitch of your voice at the end of each sentence, implying a question, as it makes you appear uncertain.

Be prepared. Prior to the interview think through the answers that you would give to expected questions. You may be asked to speak to the following topics:

- Your strengths as a person and as a teacher
- Your weaknesses as a person and as a teacher
- How you plan a unit
- Your teaching philosophy
- Teaching strategies that you use in your teaching
- Teaching techniques that you use in your teaching
- Your philosophy about classroom management
- Your classroom management plan
- How you create a positive learning environment in your classroom
- What you think are characteristics of an effective teacher
- How you assess and evaluate the learning of your students.

A listing of typical music teacher interview questions can be found in the NAFME on-line publication *A Career Guide for Music Education, 2nd Ed.* at www.menc.org/careers/view/a-career-guide-for-music-education-2nd-ed.

Find out in advance what you can about the music program and the school. It impresses the interviewers that you have made the effort to discover what is special about their school; it speaks to you being highly interested and motivated towards this particular teaching position. School web-sites are an excellent source of information. It will help with your confidence at the interview if you have taken the time to find out and practice saying the names of the school administrators before meeting them at the interview. Have some ques-

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tions to ask the interviewers. How many students are in the program? How is the program timetabled? Is there an instrument loan arrangement or must students purchase their own instruments? Where does the music come from, does the school own it or is it borrowed? Is there a parents' organization? What is the yearly budget for the program? Who provides the funds, the school, or the parents' organization? What are the administration's expectations for the music program? Ask to see the facilities, the music room, the instrument storage room, the practice rooms, etc. For a guide to help you gauge what you are looking for, see the NAFME on-line publication *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Music Instruction, Grades PreK-12* at www.menc.org/resources/view/opportunity-to-learn-standards-for-music-instruction-grades-prek-12.

At the conclusion of the interview, stand, thank the interviewers (use their proper names) for their time and interest in you, and let them know that you are looking forward to hearing from them once they have interviewed all the candidates and made a decision.

Note: Your first job will have a huge impact on your career in music education. Be as selective as you feel you can afford to be. Do not accept a position that leaves little opportunity for you to succeed. Failure as a first-year band teacher can be emotionally devastating and career ending. Choose a position that provides you with sufficient resources, a reasonable teaching load, and administrative support. Be wary of schools and administrations that have a history of replacing band teachers frequently. Remember – teachers do not like to leave good placements where they have strong administrative support.





Key Points

- Prepare your résumé
- Request reference letters from mentor teachers, professors, previous employers, etc.
- Submit your application to the schools/districts where you hope to work
- Prepare for the interview – anticipate interviewers questions, prepare your questions
- Refer to the NAFME on-line publication *A Career Guide for Music Education, 2nd Ed.* by Barbara Payne for additional help with all aspects of the job application

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Getting Ready for September

With any luck you will secure a position at least several weeks prior to the start of school in the fall. When you are hired for the position, ask how you may obtain access to the school during these weeks. With any new band teaching assignment you have much work to do. In order to be prepared for the start of school you must assess the instrument, music, and supplies inventories. You need to organize the band room and make a comprehensive year-plan to present to administration, students, and parents in the early weeks of school. This pre-September preparation is key to ensuring you have an excellent start and a successful year.

Inventory

Locate the instrument inventory record and check it against the instruments in the storeroom. You are now responsible for the instrument inventory so it is important that you double check the inventory record and verify its accuracy. Are instruments signed out to students for the summer or are there instruments in the repair shop? If you have found inconsistencies in the inventory list you need to prepare a new list. You may make changes to this list when instruments float back in September from various places. By the end of September you should submit a final and official inventory to the administration and keep a copy for your records.

Do an assessment of every instrument the school owns. If you are uncertain as to the playability of an instrument, take it to a repairperson, or ask your music store of choice to send a repairperson

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to the school to check the instruments and take away for repair any instruments that are not in playable condition.

Ask the school administration for your class enrollment to determine the number of students enrolled in the band program. You want to compare these numbers to the numbers of instruments you currently have. Your enrollment numbers will vary slightly in the first weeks of September but you want to be sure that you have sufficient inventory to begin the year. If the school uses one of the music industry rental programs, now would be a good time to make first contact with the music store that you choose to deal with. If your school purchases instruments and then rents them to students, have the music store supply you with current prices for instruments. Check with your school administration and your band parents' association regarding the purchase of instruments – where the funds come from and the procedure for ordering instruments and paying the supplier. Find out what your yearly budget is – from the school and from the band parents. Have all this information handy, just in case you have to make a few quick purchases in the second week of September. If this is your first year at the school, you may want to look at concert programs from the previous year to determine what instruments you need for your Grade 8s and Grade 9s. Be prepared to make adjustments. There will be new students in the band program (moved to the school district or did not play in Grade 7 but now want to be in band) and some students who have dropped the program or moved to another school.

Assess the music that the school owns. In particular, be sure that you have at least one complete set of band method books for each grade. What about arrangements of concert band music? Does the school band library have an assortment of classical transcriptions, band originals, popular music, marches, etc.? Check the music inventory with the local music festival list – often these lists include a variety of styles, better known composers, and quality music. If the library has not been catalogued, it would be helpful to get this job done at some point in the year. This may be a good job for a group of helpful students or a band parent. Obtain enough music folders so that every student has his/her own.

Check on supplies. Do you have enough valve oil, trombone slide cream, reeds, cleaning equipment for all instruments, extra neck straps, cork grease, slide grease, key oil, etc. Does your band room have an instrument repair kit? If not, go to your music store of choice and have the repairperson assemble a basic repair kit for you.

Is there a secure storage cabinet for the supplies? If not, go to your local hardware store and buy a mechanics chest with lockable drawers. Do not forget about the percussion requirements. Do you need drum sticks, timpani mallets, bell mallets, and small percussion instruments such as triangles and tambourines? Do you have a sufficient number of heavy-duty music stands (forget the wire racks, they will reinforce the concept of “mid-term break”)? Go to work with a wrench and tighten the bases on the stands you have. A coat of black spray paint will rejuvenate your stands if needed – another job for some band students and parents.

The Room

Make the room your own. Replace the previous teacher’s posters with new ones. Poster-size fingering charts are a good option if placed where students will be able to see them when they need a reminder. Posters of musicians holding instruments correctly are also a great teaching aid. Set up the room the way that you think it will work best for you. Visualize the flow patterns of students as they enter, set books down, retrieve instruments from storage, assemble instruments, and get their folders and method books. Is there ample space for the students to move and carry out these pre-class tasks? Position the white board and the stereo where they are easily accessible to your podium. When will you get supplies for students? Your answer may determine where you place the supply cabinet. Do you want your band set-up to face the door through which students enter, so those who arrive late can distract those who are seated? Have a clock on the wall behind the band where you can see it – this will help with your lesson pacing.

Many band rooms are too small so reduce as much clutter as you can and leave ample floor space so students can carry out their routines in an orderly way. Your goal is to have the students enter an organized and appealing rehearsal space. The first impression the students have of you is likely based on what you do with the band room before they arrive.

Planning the Year

You are ready to begin planning for your teaching year. When you are at the music store, pick up one of their complimentary year-calendars. The calendar shows the dates of local music festivals and conferences. Add to these dates your school district’s holiday periods