

recorded parents' perceived feelings regarding their children's band participation. Parents were categorized as those of either a "dropout" or "non-dropout" band student. As you might expect, parents of non-dropouts believed their kids had a better attitude toward band, had average or slightly above average musical talent, practiced more frequently, and were making good to excellent progress. Furthermore, those parents believed that band provided benefits not found in other school subjects and encouraged family attendance at live arts events during leisure time. I did find it interesting that the students were not as positive in their responses as their parents, but consider the impact of the positive parent!

Research by R. H. Woody in a 2004 issue of *Music Educators Journal* confirmed families as a primary motivating factor for young music students. Other studies have described the effect parents can have by exhibiting negative attitudes, as well as by how passive or aggressive their support of the music student is. In fact, there is ample research linking positive, supportive and active parents with students who successfully participate in music and, more specifically, music ensembles.

So, how can parents help support their child's instrumental music education, whether that student is a fifth-grade beginner or a high school senior? Here's a list of 10 suggestions to get the ball rolling:

- Invest in a good, brand-name instrument. Nothing is more discouraging to a student than attempting to play on a bad one.
- And bad instruments also lead to bad habits. Perhaps Grandpa's clarinet might best be left in the attic.
- Help the student find a time to set aside to practice every day, as well as finding a specific place to practice. This will help develop positive repetition and create the right mindset. For beginners, think about two or three 5-minute sessions, and then extend the time from there – they don't have as much to practice yet, and this will also help strengthen embouchure muscles.
- Support the sounds you hear! And know that it ain't gonna be pretty at first. Refrain from comments like: "Ouch," "What was that?" "Stop," or "Can you do this later?" Replace those with: "Oh, I like that," "Play that again for me," and "That's getting better." Be POSITIVE.
- Create opportunities for the student to

perform. Family gatherings, holidays, church, that lunch meeting – nothing is more exciting than performing for people, no matter how simple the song. (Line #28 is just fine.)

- Lessons are a terrific way to help the student musician not only progress, but to stay motivated! Of all the things a parent can do to help their student's musical progress, none can have more impact than the individual attention and expertise provided by a good private instructor.
- Attending live performances of different kinds of music can serve to expose, educate, motivate and inspire the musician while immersing him or her in the excitement of such an event. A great aside to the experience is the emphasis it places on the importance of music as a part of the family's artistic culture.
- Summer music camps are a great way to provide not just a musical experience, but one which can be life-changing due to the short, yet intense nature of such an event. Being surrounded by like-minded peers can have a profound effect on musical growth, as well as learning from terrific, dedicated instructors.

- Music downloads and CDs! Of course, this probably won't take much urging, but when possible try to encourage both diverse and major works/composer/groups/artists in addition to the "normal" listening fare. Don't forget to suggest artists and pieces/songs you enjoy, too (a great source of discussion)! Note: recorded music is not a substitute for live performance! It's still extremely important to have that live experience.
- Think about times to engage in musical conversation, for example, "What did you think of that movie soundtrack?" How about asking, "What is that instrument?" You get the idea.
- Encourage the student to make music with others, whether friends or a local community group.

**Bonus:** Become active in the school's music activities or booster organizations. Your help is not only important in its own right, but it sends a strong message to the student about the importance of music.

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## Recruitment and Retention: Knowing the Research and Making an Informed Plan

*Brian C. Wesolowski*

The survival and longevity of a music program often depends on a music educator's ability to recruit and retain students. With the recent effects of class size amendments, emphasis on standardized testing, increased budget cuts, and endless other issues facing our nation's music education initiatives, music educators consistently find themselves in situations where student enrollment is the vital underpinning to their program's very survival. The reality is that music educators do not have any control over the national or state mandated academic and fiscal policies that threaten their programs. Every program is vulnerable to cutbacks. However, knowing that school budgets are often based upon student enrollment, music educators have a tangible method for ensuring their program's survival-- and it starts with the recruitment program.

The famous Karl Gehrken's phrase and former MENC slogan, "*Music for Every Child, Every Child for Music*" is the ultimate objective for any recruiting program. Each child in our school system should have the opportunity to study a musical instrument, for its value as a part of his/her educational experience is immeasurable. Realistically, however, we can only provide the opportunity for all and try to recruit as many as possible. An understanding of research in the areas of performance achievement, retention, and attrition can play an important role in informing, optimizing, and streamlining one's recruitment strategy.

*What students have the best chance for success?*

*What influences students' decisions to join a music program?*

*What impacts students' choices on*

*instrument selection?*

*What predicts student retention in music programs?*

*What factors influence students to leave a music program?*

The answers to such questions can provide the foundation to a proactive yet preventative recruiting philosophy that can ultimately optimize time, financial expenditures, and results.

### **What students have the best chance for success?**

Although the goal of a recruitment program is to enroll all potential students, the recruitment process can be more efficiently managed by focusing on the students that have the most potential to be successful in music. Every student has the potential and ability to achieve success in music through formal instruction, environmental influences, and their capacity for learning. However, it is aptitude that provides educators with measureable attributes of student's innate abilities to achieve success. According to Klinedinst (1991) and Belczyk (1992), the best predictors for performance achievement and success in a student's first year of music instruction include high scholastic achievement scores in reading and math, high scores on Edwin Gordon's Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation (IMMA) test, and the application of the results from Edwin Gordon's Instrument Timbre Preference Test (ITPT) during the instrument fitting process. By testing potential students using Gordon's IMMA and considering their success on standardized testing such as Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), a music educator has quantifiable evidence of a student's aptitude for musical achievement. This evidence can ultimately provide a target population of potential students to recruit. Bazan's (2005) study indicates that music educators who consulted academic achievement tests had lower attrition rates than educators who did not consult such data. In addition, by utilizing students' timbre preference results from the ITPT as a guide for instrument matching, the educator is increasing the potential for student achievement and higher retention rates. According to Gordon (1984), "students who learn to play instruments associated with their timbre preferences demonstrate higher levels of music achievement than do students who learn to play music instruments for which they do not have timbre preferences" (p. 1).

### **What influences students' decisions to join a music program?**

It has been shown that immediate family members have the most influence over a child's willingness to participate in a music program in addition to the specific instrument he/she selects (Davidson, Sloboda, & Howe 1995-96; Creech & Hallam 2003, Zdzinski, 1996). Furthermore, students who were exposed to and know more about specific instruments were more likely to join a music program (Bayley, 2000). This indicates that the recruitment program should provide potential students ample exposure to the music program as well as exposure to individual instruments. This can include assembly concerts, recruitment concerts, hands-on demonstrations, classroom visits, community exposure, an online presence, social networking, and numerous opportunities to engage in open dialogues with potential students' parents.

### **What impacts students' choices on instrument selection?**

The two most important factors for a student's choice of instrument is his/her perception that the instrument is "fun" or "easy," and the timbre of the instrument (Kuhlman, 2005). In addition, gender bias is a critical factor in musical instrument preference. Specifically, females are more likely to be influenced by the instrument size (Kuhlman, 2005). This information can play an important part in the psychological aspect of recruiting, particularly when one's recruiting goal is driven by instrumentation management motives. During recruitment concerts, highlight and feature specific students that defy gender bias. Allow opportunities for potential students to speak with those being featured and focus on the "fun elements" to playing those instruments.

### **What predicts student retention in music programs?**

The best predictors for students to remain in a music program include home parental support, scholastic achievement, self-efficacy, and physical trait/instrument matching (Hardin, 1990; Klinedust, 1991). After collecting and evaluating students' academic achievement data and allowing

opportunities to discuss participation opportunities with parents, it is crucial to emphasize to candidates and their parents their potential for success. Individualize the recruitment process and allow some time to spend with each potential student and their parents. Utilize the power of positive social persuasion from standout high school students and allow for the potential students to engage in the vicarious experience- "if they can do it, I can do it also." In addition, emphasize the notion that a shared sense of family and community exists within your music program. Potential students want to believe that they belong, feel worthwhile, and know that they will play a critical part in the program. Music programs do this better than any program at the secondary school level. Lastly, make it a point to try and match students' physical characteristics to the compatibility of an instrument. The process will not only allow the student to become more familiar and knowledgeable with the particular instruments, but a physically compatible instrument will allow the student a better chance of success, leading to improved self-efficacy. The objective is to alleviate frustration and allow for optimal and immediate success early on. The priority should of course go to what instrument the student shows the most interest in playing. However, this process may help direct the undecided student as well as provide another opportunity to encourage the student while setting him/her up for success.

### **What factors influence students to leave a music program?**

The factors that influence second year instructional attrition include a general loss of interest (Brakel, 1997), a desire to participate in other activities (Hurley, 1995), peer influences (Hartley, 1996), and parental attitude towards music (Brown, 1996). So how do we stop attrition? According to Stewart (2005) and Klinedust (2005), motivating influences for students to continue their participation in music programs include having a "a fun experience," taking trips, students' perceptions of whether they are valued as an ensemble member, participation in abundant performance opportunities, and maintaining friendships. As one can see, students are motivated to stay in a music program for many non-music related reasons. It is important to remember that the most important goals of music in the schools are to

enhance the quality of students' lives, develop model citizens, and nurture students' lifelong appreciation for music. Sensitivity to such factors can aid in maintaining and fostering program sustainability.

The recruitment process is an arduous yet vital task in maintaining the health and vitality of secondary school music programs. Advocacy alone is not an adequate means for program sustainability. Secondary school music programs depend on a healthy student enrollment at all grade levels to ensure their survival. An informed recruitment program may provide community visibility, increase student participation, and reduce student attrition while providing an overarching structure for improved musical experiences.

### Setting Up a Recruiting Plan

Although recruiting is a year-round job, these steps may provide beneficial insight into managing a recruitment strategy:

1. *Generate a schedule of events and a justification for why each event is important.*
  - The depth and breath of a strong recruitment program will require the time, approval, and funding of administrators from several schools. Advocacy for each event is a crucial element in making sure all events are supported and approved.
  - Make sure the schedule avoids any conflicts with the school calendar.
2. *Meet with your school administrators about your recruiting goals and the process for achieving them.*
3. *Place orders for musical aptitude and timbre preference battery tests (Gordon's Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation and Gordon's Instrument Timbre Preference Test).*
  - Both tests and supplemental materials are available through GIA music publishers ([http://www.giamusic.com/music\\_education](http://www.giamusic.com/music_education)).
4. *Publicize, publicize, publicize!*
5. *Schedule assembly concerts and a "recruitment tour."*
  - This should be a series of concerts with fun, engaging concert material where all of the instruments can be introduced and highlighted.
6. *Make sure a letter goes home with each student attending the concerts announcing your recruiting campaign. The letter should include a tear-off response or self-addressed postcard for those students interested in enrolling.*
6. *Follow up with all students you did not hear back from.*
7. *Administer battery tests to all students.*
  - A supportive administration may allow these tests to be conducted and administered by classroom teachers.
  - If classroom administration is not possible, a separate time outside of school may need to be set up. In this case, it may be beneficial to coordinate it with an information session.
8. *Acquire all academic achievement test results in order to target students that have the innate potential to succeed.*
9. *Send written communication home about the positive results of the battery tests and academic achievement tests. This letter should also provide an invitation and information announcing the date of an "instrument petting zoo."*
10. *Set up an "instrument petting zoo" for all interested students and parents.*
  - Solicit the help of a local music store for instruments.
  - Have members of the high school ensembles (leadership) demonstrate the instruments and talk with the interested students.
  - Each instrument booth should have a colorful and fun handout available about the instrument.
  - Have small high school ensembles performing throughout the event
  - Make appointment times with each student to have his/her physical characteristics evaluated.
  - Have forms available for each student to mark their instrument preferences and the results of the physical characteristic examination.
11. *Follow up with all students and parents that did not attend the instrument petting zoo.*
12. *Follow up with written communication as well as individual phone calls or parent/student/teacher conferences for all instrument petting zoo attendees.*
13. *Organize a recruiting night/information session for parents only.*
  - The purpose of this meeting is to provide an overview of the program and to answer any parent concerns or questions.
  - Have a music vendor available to discuss equipment purchasing and rentals
  - This is the time for parents to secure an instrument.
  - Have a representative from the booster organization available to solicit new parent membership.
  - Send a handout home with each parent detailing the mini-camp information schedule.
14. *Organize a mini band camp the week prior to the start of school (suggested for four days, 3 hours per day).*
  - All newly recruited instrumentalists are to report with instruments.
  - Have specialized clinicians available for each instrument to lead like-instrument classes.
  - Be visible and attentive to all student and parent concerns.
  - This is good opportunity to establish a mentorship program between the high school students and newly recruited students.
  - At the conclusion of camp, send each student participant home with a positive progress report.
15. *At the conclusion of the camp, follow up with thank you letters to all involved in the recruitment process (administrators, administrative staff, teachers, vendors, and custodians)*

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## REPertoire RAMBLINGS

### Elementary/Choral

Brandon Nonnemaker

#### *Good Night: A Russian Song*

Dmitri Kabalevsky/Rao

Russian composer Dmitri Kabalevsky shared this song with Doreen Rao as a symbol of their friendship. She then wrote this arrangement in his memory and premiered it at the American Orff Schulwerk National Conference in 1987. Written for unison or two-part treble voices and piano, this lyrical piece serves as a great opportunity to rehearse expressive singing and phrasing. The primary challenge will be intonation with sustained phrases, some difficult intervallic relationships, and expressive dynamic variation. This arrangement also includes an optional bordun for Orff instruments. What an exciting piece to add diversity to your programming!

### *Why We Sing*

Greg Gilpin

This is the ultimate concert closer (or opener)! Gilpin begins the piece by offering opportunity for solo or small ensemble singing. In the style of an anthem, the song grows and builds through a dramatic bridge, modulation, and final refrain with descant. You may wish to consider *Why We Sing* for combined groups. Through his text, Gilpin encourages and inspires fellowship and celebration of music and singing! This piece is highly recommended to challenge the musicianship and emotional range of your group of young singers.

### *Al Shlosha D'Varim*

Allan E. Naplan

This lyrical setting, derived from the Jewish morality laws, exposes young singers to the Hebrew language. Naplan writes in the form of a partner song and uses two counter melodies to dictate one continuous statement of the text. It opens with a unison (opt. solo) presentation of the primary musical theme. The melody is captivating, but contains some tricky rhythmic intricacies. Joined by the secondary musical theme, the simplicity of the resulting sonority and pureness of treble voices with piano is breathtaking. This piece makes for a beautiful introduction to singing expressively in a foreign language.

### *The Mysterious Pineapple*

Philip Hagemann

If you are not familiar with this piece you need to be! Written for a cappella two-part treble voices, *The Mysterious Pineapple* is quirky, interesting to listen to, and adds much needed variety to most programming. My students love to sing it and I love to direct it! The text chronicles a run in with a "large and shifty pineapple" and the narrator's refusal of the "very peculiar" pineapple's request. The repetitiveness of part two's ostinato will challenge intonation and rhythmic accuracy and vitality. With energetic direction and focused musicianship, this piece is sure to be a hit!

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