

Planning for Final Days of the School Year

The topic of ***Tips That Click*** this month is helping directors plan appropriate activities for the final days of the semester. We are all searching for intentional activities that will engage students in meaningful learning and set the stage for the next school year. While it is true that this is a time of year that has many interruptions and diversions, careful planning and orderly procedures can lead to positive and non-chaotic closing days.

These are some great ideas on using the final weeks of school to take care of your students and your inventory in a very efficient and effective manner.

Rho Chapter of Phi Beta Mu International Bandmaster Fraternity is committed to the improvement of bands and band instruction in this state. Comments on this column and ideas for future columns are welcome! Please email: pemin@mac.com

1. ***Jim Knight*** is a past president of Rho Chapter and a veteran teacher of over 40 years. *Jim taught many years in Florida, where he developed the band at Pace High School into one of the finest in the state. He has also taught in Alabama at Gordo High School, McGill-Toolen High School and Briarwood Christian School.*

He has some very good reminders of important tasks that should be covered at the end of the year. "Make sure that you get accurate addresses for all the students that you teach that are returning and especially any incoming students from feeder schools. The contact information that you had at the beginning of the year may not be current, and it is vital that you have every student (and parent) review it and acknowledge that it is accurate. This is the primary way that you have to make sure that you are planning adequately for your instructional (music, handouts, etc.) and logistical (uniforms, chairs, stands) needs for the summer and beyond." He added: "Make sure that the parents and students have detailed information about your summer program or pre-school events to insure good participation and attendance. If you are taking the students away from school, make sure that the parents have all the paperwork necessary to make this happen".

Jim usually checked his instrument inventory personally. "I felt like I could get best idea of what repairs might be needed, and had the best eye to catch things that a student might miss. If I could get a store repairman to come by, I would have things laid out and we could get this knocked out in a morning. I could leave for the summer knowing that things would be ready when I got back to start the new season!"

2. ***Greg Gumina*** is current President of the Alabama Music Educators Association and has been a band director for 24 years in this state. *He has served 22 of those years as Assistant Band Director at Shades Valley High School, where his bands and percussion ensembles have achieved many honors. Greg is a newly elected member of Rho Chapter of Phi Beta Mu.*

Greg says: "I have a philosophy of "get ready to be ready", and a set of regular procedures that help my students get the year closed out in a way that gives me less stress during post-planning. I begin in April, after Spring Break. I talk to the students and have them understand that the next few weeks will go by a lot faster than we think! I make sure that they realize the importance of keeping on top of deadlines for their academic work and other testing activities so that we can use the few hours of band time we have left. I set aside a time to get the band room thoroughly organized and cleaned – we have usually let some things slide during preparation for Music Performance Assessment. I have this overhaul assigned by section to keep everyone involved and accountable. Once everything is clean and organized, it will be simpler to keep it that way until the year is over. Another activity that requires a special day is a period near the end to inspect instruments and get them ready for repair. I specifically target the students that are responsible for two school instruments (French Horn/Mellophone, Euphonium/Marching Baritone, and Tuba/Sousaphone) and do a careful inventory to insure that we can give the repairman an accurate idea of what needs to be done to get both instruments ready for the Fall so we don't waste any time when we sit down to play. I also find that a critical day is the day after the final concert. I make sure that we take up and file all outstanding music, so we are not chasing it down later. My students are eager to play and read music until the last day, but we have a procedure in place where we just read a piece or two every day and then take it up at the end to avoid problems. As a result of having the students help me the last few weeks, I can spend my time at the end of school wrapping up paperwork and planning for the next year instead of being overwhelmed!"