



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 22-24, 2021**

**It Starts with Culture! Building  
Program Culture Strong Enough to  
Overcome a Pandemic**

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**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**



## Texas Bandmasters Association Convention & Clinic

### It Starts with Culture:

Building a Culture Strong Enough to Overcome a Pandemic

Saturday, July 24, 2021 - 8:00 AM - CC214

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\*\*\*The On-Demand Video Clinic follows this handout. Please utilize the video for further elaboration of the material below.\*\*\*

***At the foundation of any successful organization, a standard underlying theme is the establishment and protection of organizational culture. Strong and positive organizational culture creates a collective “why” within the members of the organization AND can help the organization withstand hardship. These hardships can often be out of our control (i.e. a global pandemic), BUT a positive band culture will not only help you withstand obstacles, but will also help the organization utilize them for further growth.***

#### Relationships

Healthy and positive relationships are EVERYTHING when looking at the culture of your program

- Staff to Staff
  - Assistant Lens
    - Constant support is key
    - Be willing to disagree appropriately
  - Head Director Lens
    - Constant support and mentorship
    - Be willing to have the difficult conversations
    - Delegate...it builds trust with others
- Staff to Student

- Engrain the culture of the band hall into the students from Day One of beginning band
- Build a rapport that makes students feel comfortable participating in rehearsal
  - Great teacher-student relationships improve intrinsic motivation
- **Make every student feel accepted**
- Provide students with choices
- Learn something about every child (non-band related)
- Student to Student
  - Facilitate opportunities for students to interact outside of rehearsal
  - Utilize the leadership team and train concepts of relationships being the foundational concept of leadership
  - Student to student connection is the reason MANY students participate in band. Taking time for it will pay off in building your program
- Staff to Parent
  - Effective and timely communication builds strong relationships with parents
  - Transparency and honesty
  - Small talk can turn into big support! It's part of the job to get to know your parent community
  - Keep it professional
- Staff to Administration
  - "Professionally Personal"
  - Figure out the administration's communication style
  - Focus on student well-being and performance
  - Establish trust
  - Invite them to see what is happening in the band hall, not just performances
  - Acknowledge their presence at performances

### **Embrace the Process/Not the Product**

- Evaluate how you are utilizing the bulk of your time...
  - The learning/rehearsal process is where you will spend the majority of time with your students
  - The environment that you utilize for the majority of your time=Band Culture
  - Rehearse wisely my friends... (and positively!)
- Be process focused, not competitively focused
  - Competitive stress doesn't just wear down directors, it wears down students
  - Build a culture that is process focused with goals that are measurable by the directors and students
  - Outside achievements are just byproducts of the process

## **Performance/Musicianship**

- Do the kids love music when they leave?
  - Even if they don't pursue music afterwards...
    - Create lifelong music allies
  - Set high expectations
    - It's ok to be demanding in the framework of inspiring the students and offering the tools to make them successful
  - Give the students varied performance opportunities
  - Play varied literature
    - Provides a more well-rounded education and will appeal to different tastes

## **Evaluation/Reflection**

- Retention
  - Retention is one of the key metrics to analyze culture within your organization
  - Often, as band directors, we can take to take it personally when we don't retain students
  - Take a deep breath and analyze why students might be leaving. Pivot and proceed forward.
- Recruitment
  - Be a local celebrity on every campus
    - Your consistent visibility and association with students in every grade level can be a comforting factor for students as they switch campuses
  - Have an exciting web presence
    - Websites, videos (with testimonials), etc.
  - Change up the routine
    - Trends change every day!
  - Get help from previous teachers
    - 5th grade teachers are your best resource!
  - Have current students send letters to new students
  - Assign accountability partners
  - Teach at multiple campuses for a day
- Student Feedback
  - This can be solicited globally or through targeted conversations
  - Utilizing large program activities such as leadership auditions to solicit student feedback on the band program
  - Being open to student feedback is difficult, but can be very beneficial to program culture

- Parent Communication - "How's your inbox looking?"
  - Often times, the amount of email you get can be a direct reflection of your level of communication and your culture
- Stakeholder Feedback (Admin/teachers)
  - Frequent visits to administrative offices can help you gauge the perception of your program with campus administration
  - Email the teachers - "Let us know how we can help support you so that our band students can be academically successful."
  - Development of an academic grade monitoring system with students can help pave the way for effective communication and feedback with teachers