

# Learning Now: Learning Forever

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

---

In the words of Aristotle: “The more we know, the more we realize we don’t know.”

From three/four years old, we spend our lives invested in education. From pre-school to high school, then to the college years, and FINALLY comes the much-anticipated graduation. With all that learning, one would think WE WOULD / SHOULD KNOW! Yet, when we enter our field of study, it becomes ever apparent we are merely at the front edge of the never-ending pathway of understanding. It is when we admit to ourselves, *I am only at the entrance of the knowledge landscape yet to be consumed*, do we come to grips with this reality: **True learning is not a destination, but rather a gateway to continue the lifelong journey of learning/growing/becoming.**

When we have a college degree, we can be absolutely certain of one thing: WE HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE. This is not to be confused with mastery of the given subject. It merely means we have completed the requisites of the assigned curriculum. It is not the end of personal study, but only the beginning of exploring one’s unlimited potential.

As Winston Churchill wrote: “I began my education at a very early age, in fact, right after I left college.”

In the discipline of music, those who are successful are committed to self-growth, self-improvement, engaging with others of like minds, pushing beyond the comfort zone into the always expanding library of more information, more experience, more understanding, more awareness... and on, and on...only to discover

the universe of learning is infinite. However, the choice to embrace the rigors of intellectual advancement IS the reflected attitude of the experts, the scholars, and the leaders within the profession.

We are all familiar with the world famous Spanish cellist Pablo Casals. When he was 95 years old, a young reporter during an interview offered up this question: “Mr. Casals, you are 95 and you’re the greatest cellist that has ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?” Mr. Casals answered, “Because I think I’m making progress.”...and, of course, that’s WHY he was the world’s greatest cellist!

PERSONAL STORY: Several years ago I was speaking at a state music education association convention. Just prior to the start of the general session, John Paynter (then Director of Bands at Northwestern University and a hero to everyone in the band community) entered the auditorium, sat down in the front row with paper-’n-pencil in hand. I immediately walked his direction to introduce myself, but (in his signature style) he beat me to the draw, stood and shook my hand and said, “Hi Tim. I’m looking forward to hearing your keynote address.” Caught completely off guard and in the presence of an iconic hero, I managed to respond, “Mr. Paynter, thank you for coming to the session, but sir, why are you here?” He said, “I’m trying to learn...so don’t disappoint me.”

Following the presentation, he came forward, thanked me and went on to say, “I’m directing the all-state band

at the conference. Rehearsal starts in forty-five minutes. I look forward to seeing you there so I can return the favor.”

It was NOT a request, but rather a certain invited expectation delivered by a master mentor. Interpreted: “Tim, it’s now time for YOU to learn!” And, yes, I attended the rehearsal, and yes, I took notes, and yes, I thanked him profusely for his brilliant, memorable, priceless kindness. Above all, I LEARNED!

We are fortunate to be availed throughout the year to a robust schedule of workshops, clinics, camps, and professional development programs. Attending and participating in these events is the best investment we can make in our future. We will be the benefactor of the first-hand knowledge of those who have “been to the well.” Moreover, we will be in the presence of committed, dedicated, positive role models who prove, unequivocally: **The more we know, the more we realize we don’t know.**

*Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser began his teaching career at Northern Michigan University. He then moved to the University of Missouri, and from there to New Mexico State University. During that time, Tim developed highly acclaimed groups in both instrumental and vocal music. Following his tenure in the college band directing world, he spent three years with McCormick’s Enterprises working as Executive Director of Bands of America. In 1981, Tim created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., an organization designed to manage the many requests for teacher in-service workshops, student leadership seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of effective leadership training. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc.*