

additional time. Don't stay after school simply because it has become a habit.

Unless you work to achieve a balance between school and your personal life, each will suffer. Make time to explore hobbies outside of work, and take care of yourself by exercising regularly and eating healthy foods. Strive to make friends with other teachers who you will see during the day as you need someone to talk to other than students, especially if you are the only director in your program.

BUILD RAPPORT

As in any good relationship, the key to developing a positive rapport with administrators is communication. Consistently inform them of your accomplishments—administrators won't know about the wonderful things happening in your classes unless you tell them. Include administrators on group emails, invite them to watch a rehearsal or run-through, and periodically submit news for the daily announcements. At every public performance, recognize your administrators and their support for your program. Try to handle any conflict or discipline issues internally; however, if you foresee a problem with a parent or student escalating, inform an administrator before the matter reaches their desk.

Like administrators, parents need open lines of communication. They should be informed of calendar items, grading procedures, and participation expectations from the beginning of the school year. Utilize multiple methods for keeping parents updated—paper handouts, administrative software (we use Charms), the program's website, Facebook groups, and Twitter accounts. Regardless of how you communicate, be sure to understand and follow your district and campus rules about communicating electronically with parents and students.

As you consider the best way to communicate, read "Going Social" and "What You Should Know Before You Post" in the August issue of Southwestern Musician (available at www.tmea.org/emagazine).

Invite parents to serve as chaperons on trips—they will come away with a new appreciation for what you do and for how you work with their children. Make each performance memorable for parents;

this may be the only time they see you in person. Your goal should be for parents to leave with a positive perception of your organizational skills and personal interactions.

RESPECT YOUR POSITION

In the first years of service, some music teachers will work as assistant directors, and in this role, it is important to be a supportive staff member. Observe other directors' approaches to teaching and classroom management. Assuming you are in a positive environment, emulate these role models as much as possible. Learn from the head director's teaching methods as well as how they handle discipline, organizational issues, parent concerns, and administrator interactions.

When given a task or aspect of the program to be in charge of, take ownership and set high standards for your work. When your head director recognizes you are trustworthy and reliable, you will be given greater responsibilities. Make yourself available during rehearsals and classes you do not teach, and offer to help in any way possible.

Some teachers who are initially in smaller programs or who move up from an assistant position early in their career find themselves as a head director in charge of the entire program. As the head director, you must plan ahead and be as organized as possible. This will help you become a reliable leader of your program. Be a supportive member of your cluster program by attending performances and volunteering to help at others' rehearsals when appropriate. If you are fortunate enough to have an assistant, show your appreciation often. Never take your assistant for granted; mentor them daily because the better they become, the better your program becomes.

MIRROR SUCCESS

While it's true throughout your career, in your initial years it is especially important to look for successful programs to emulate. Listen to recordings of profes-

sional groups and outstanding examples of student groups in your division. On a day off, observe directors in a neighboring school district, and take the opportunity to attend Region and All-State rehearsals to learn from highly-respected directors. As you focus on improving your skills as a teacher, always remember to nurture your foundation as a musician. Attend professional concerts, practice your instrument, and continue to improve your craft.

PROGRAM WISELY

When it's performance time, there is no room for excuses. You can't turn around at a contest and offer the judges a disclaimer. Simply do the best you can with what you have, and you can come away from each performance with a sense of accomplishment. Programming is one of the most important aspects of our work that many teachers find challenging early in their careers. Before reviewing literature, you must fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of your group as this will certainly influence your decisions as well as advice you seek from others. Take time to review the UIL Prescribed Music List (PML) available at www.uiltexas.org/music/pml. Obtain scores and listen to recordings to build your knowledge of the repertoire from which you are choosing, and ask for advice from veteran teachers.

Once you have chosen a piece, make a long-range rehearsal plan. Know where you want your group to be by the pre-contest performance as well as where they need to be by the actual contest date. Devise more specific rehearsal plans along the way, and know that you may have to adjust your plans based on what you hear in rehearsals. (For more guidance on rehearsal strategies, read "Breaking the Everyday Routine" on page 12.)

ESTABLISH STRUCTURE

Being organized will help you stay calm throughout the chaos that our job often presents, and demonstrating structure behind how you work will help parents and colleagues recognize you as a dependable leader. While it sounds basic, it is important to keep your classroom and office area clean; students respond better in a tidy environment and will begin to take pride in their surroundings.

Establish daily procedures from day one. Set expectations for each aspect of your program: from rehearsal methods

to road trip behavior standards. Be clear and consistent with your procedures, and know that it might take more time and repetition at the beginning of the year to get them established.

REMAIN PATIENT


Change will not come quickly to any music program, especially one that has been established for many years. Know that each year really will get easier; you will have more experience, and your students and their parents will respect you

more each year you are at the school. Be consistent with your expectations, energetic and supportive of your students, and change will come.

GET INVOLVED

In addition to connecting with colleagues in your district and on your campus, it is imperative to get involved in your profession. In addition to TMEA, consider membership in other associations as well (TODA, TCDA, TBA, ATSSB, etc.). Regularly attend your professional asso-

ciations' meetings and conferences. As a member of these associations, there will always be volunteer opportunities that allow you to become more involved and connected with colleagues from across the state. Don't pass up this chance to get to know other successful directors. You will be giving back to the profession, but in the process you will gain much more.

As you consider these ideas for a successful start, know that they are all the result of many successes and failures we have shared as a close circle of friends. When we compiled these ideas, we realized one important thing each of us share—we survived our first five years by focusing on teaching what we were passionate about: *music*. 

TMEA Mentoring Network

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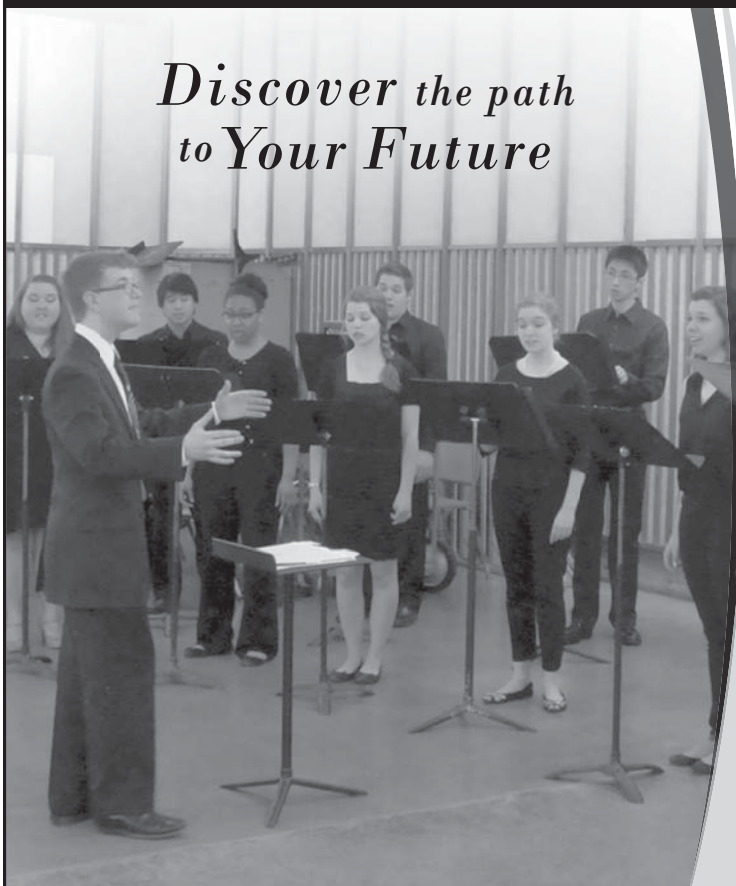
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Rylon Guidry is Head Band Director at Arbor Creek MS (Lewisville ISD); Steve Lisko is Associate Director of Bands at McKinney Boyd HS (McKinney ISD); Tiffany Lisko is Head Band Director at Dowell MS (McKinney ISD); Jennifer Wren is Associate Band Director at Doerre Intermediate School (Klein ISD); and Joel Wren is an Assistant Principal at Klein High School (Klein ISD).

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