



by Mark A. Crim and Nathan R. Templeton

**M**usic educators quickly discover that administrators hold great influence over their programs. Administrators control budgets, schedules, staffing, and sometimes, it seems, the quality of your day. Influenced by growing state and federal mandates and budget priorities, they can often appear distant or seem to have unnecessary expectations for music educators. However, the vast majority of district and campus administrators do see the value in music and want large, effective music programs to be part of their school. Administrators can be and often are your greatest champions, and developing good professional relationships with them can make the difference between your program being perceived as an integral part of the school or as a costly elective.

We realize that in our previous work as music educators, we were fortunate to have been mentored well. Our campus administrators were caring professionals who wanted to be in a shared partnership with us to build a foundation that supported student learning. Each of us also recalls those same administrators reminding us that our programs were just one piece of that foundation.

With experience as music educators and campus administrators, we understand the perspectives and challenges inherent in each role. So, last February, in a TMEA convention panel discussion, we posed the question to a group of music educators-turned-administrators, “What do my administrators expect from me?” This inquiry revealed areas where music educators can make positive gains in their work and relationships with their administrators. Whether you’re beginning your first job or have many years of experience, consider the following as you start this school year, striving to develop productive working relationships with your administrative team.

### Be a Member of the Instructional Team

Like instructors in every other curricular subject, music educators at all levels are responsible for teaching grade-level specific TEKS.

- Plan and document your lessons and turn them in as requested.
- Plan and document your assessments, and post grades in a timely manner.
- Participate fully in faculty training. Yes, they do apply to you.
- Coordinate calendars, facilities, and support staff so that you can take care of your business and so that everyone else can as well.
- Work to see the big picture and how your program supports and benefits from it.
- Follow the policies for delivering instruction that apply to all teachers on your campus.

### Be a Professional Educator

Being a professional educator means doing the things expected of every teacher on your campus. Music educators at all levels, as certified professionals, must strive to establish friendly professional relationships with other teachers and administrators.

- Do your share of duty and committee assignments.
- Work the hours expected of you as a music educator. Understand that at times this will mean early and late hours.
- Follow district policies for discipline management and set and enforce policies for your program.
- Have procedures in place for handling money (especially

**Intentionally become part of the decision-making team. Provide candid and honest input. Your perspective is needed and important.**

cash) that are in line with campus and district policies, and follow them without variance.

- Be self-directed. Act without needing reminders.
- Accept and work with change.

#### Be a Communicator

Well-developed communication skills are essential for educators. Music education is no exception. Taking a proactive approach will be noticed and appreciated

by your administrators.

- Meet often with your administrators to check in and talk about what is happening in your world. Share your good news (and even the bad).
- Return phone calls and emails promptly—the same day whenever possible. Keep documentation of communication (especially email).
- Written communication by email or text message to anyone needs to be crystal clear, grammatically correct, and spell-checked. If you are angry or frustrated, consider addressing the issue in person instead of writing something that might be misinterpreted (and possibly used against you in a disciplinary matter).
- Communication with parents needs to be positive. Take the high ground—it belongs to you!
- Social media can be a useful tool to disseminate information and build recognition for your program. However, follow district policies, be careful what you post, monitor what is posted on any page you administer,

and remove anything that might be offensive to parents, colleagues, or administrators. Social media is not the place to rant or gossip about a school problem.

- Educate administrators about your program. Invite them to camps, contests, concerts, banquets, and trips. Invite them to sit in on a rehearsal, walk into the stadium with the marching band, or participate in the choral sightreading process. As a result, they will have a better idea of what you are doing and how hard you and your students work!

#### Be a Problem Solver (Not Crisis Manager)

Challenges happen every day and in every school. How you respond determines the level of confidence your administrators will have in you to make good decisions in tough situations. Identify problems before they escalate, and use every resource at your disposal to develop and implement solutions that are fair and that comply with policy.

- Respond to student or parent issues

## ANNOUNCING MUSICFIRST ACADEMY

ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MUSIC TEACHERS  
LAUNCHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

At MusicFirst Academy, music educators at all points in their careers can find professional development and college credit opportunities that focus on the use of new technology, integrated software tools and teaching music in the cloud. Our goal is for teachers to develop skills, learn pedagogical approaches and gain specific teaching tools that they can immediately implement in their classrooms. Upcoming courses include:

- Using Music Technology in the Elementary General Music Classrooms
- Assessment Strategies for Performing Ensembles
- Music Theory and the MusicFirst Online Classroom
- Teaching Music in the Cloud
- And more!

View full course listings and register today at [musicfirstacademy.com](http://musicfirstacademy.com)



The University of the Arts  
SUMMER MUSIC STUDIES



[info@musicfirst.com](mailto:info@musicfirst.com) • [MusicFirst.com](http://MusicFirst.com) • Toll Free: 855-896-3344

with open ears and a cool head. Look for common ground.

- Your administrators can best support you if they know the facts. Communicate problems clearly, thoroughly, and truthfully. If you made a mistake, own up to it.
- If you have a problem, explore possible solutions to present prior to meeting with your administrator.
- Don't issue ultimatums to your administrators, parents, or students. Agree to disagree until you are sure policy is on your side in a conflict. Having to pull back from an ultimatum can damage your credibility far more than losing the argument. Pick your battles carefully.
- Be proactive. Do your best to anticipate issues that may cause you problems and fix the root cause ahead of time when possible.

### Be a Collaborator

Find ways to become involved on your campus. Contribute your gifts and talents in an area outside the rehearsal room and invite your colleagues to do the same.

- Be visible and available. Volunteer for projects that make the school better.
- Be a mentor for a new faculty member or seek the counsel of an experienced teacher if you are new to the profession or campus.
- Get to know other faculty and staff. Relationships inside and outside your area are important to the school's mission.
- Know what is happening in the school and district. Know how your program affects the school's schedule, budget, and staffing.
- Support for diversity is every faculty and staff member's responsibility. Be creative in finding ways for every student, including those with special needs, to have successful experiences in your program.
- Keep confidences when appropriate. You may be privy to sensitive academic and family information. Don't gossip.
- Recognize and support the efforts made by the support staff. The school and your program can't run efficiently without competent

**Rather than worry about things you can't control, always consider better procedures, scheduling, and curriculum as well as other ways to make your program and school better.**

administrative assistants and aides or without clean and well-maintained buildings, safe bus transportation, and a good student nutrition program. Make friends with the important members of your school team who ensure each of these happens.

- Regardless of your level of agreement, demonstrate your support for departmental, campus, and district policies to students and parents in positive ways. More often than not, those

who show up make policy; therefore, intentionally become part of the decision-making team. Provide candid and honest input. Your perspective is needed and important. Fight for your area of responsibility while remembering the big picture. What is in your program's best interest might not be in the school's best interest at that moment. Work to find win-win solutions.

805-338-4170 / [www.ccriddles.com](http://www.ccriddles.com) P.O. Box 363, Newbury Park, CA 91319

**CCRiddles™**  
≡ Music Theory in Riddle Form ≡

**Innovative, Versatile, Fun, and Challenging**  
Study Cards • Practice Tests • Workbooks



## VOLUME SENTRY

where the **SCIENCE** of SOUND  
meets the **ART** of SOUND

[volumesentry.com](http://volumesentry.com)

*VOLUME SENTRY is a programmable visual volume indicator. It converts volume into a series of illuminated color-coded lenses, each representing a specific volume level found in music notation.*

PSA / Vision Sound • 210-419-8308 • Patent Pending





## Be a Great Music Educator

While it sounds obvious, it's important to remember the core reason you are in the job—you were hired to teach music content, manage a program, and instill a love of music in your students. While a music supervisor may be able to identify good teaching and offer music-specific ideas for improvement, your campus administrators are unlikely to know exactly what you are doing when they come into your room. We need to recognize, however, that they are educational professionals who can quickly discern whether there is evidence

of good planning, effective delivery of your lesson, and evidence of appropriate assessment. Accept their observations and implement their suggestions for improvement. Start with the assumption that your administrators want you to be successful.


Music programs require many human, material, and financial resources. We must manage them well. Make the case for what you need in terms of staff, schedule, and budget, and know that there are other priorities competing for resources.

If you take students to contests, know that you don't have to win all the time;

however, your work needs to reflect careful planning, sequential instruction, positive outcomes, and growth. Awards and trophies reflect a met standard of excellence, but that is not the only thing on which your work will be evaluated.

Most importantly, your program should be student-centered. Your administrators know that achieving excellence requires hours of work, but your students are also enrolled in mathematics, science, foreign language, social studies, technology, language arts, and more. They love you and what you do, and they want to be with you. Be sensitive to their many other demands and don't require so much time that they can't study, do their homework, or possibly have an afterschool job.

Rather than worry about things you can't control, always consider better procedures, scheduling, and curriculum as well as other ways to make your program and school better. Making the program better means *you* have to get better as well. Find an accomplished and proven mentor and ask lots of questions (this could be someone in your district or campus or a TMEA member assigned through the TMEA Mentoring Network). It's equally important to stay abreast of innovation and emerging trends. Read. Study. Keep current in your content area. Pay attention to the details by focusing on the little things.

Getting the little things right is key to building trust and gaining support from your administrators. Strive for excellence, not perfection. Don't be afraid to fail. Improvement and innovation never happens without some growing pains. Your administrators will support you if you plan thoroughly, give your best effort, and expect the same from your students. When administrators and music educators each consider doing what's best for students, the journey toward creating and sustaining a school culture of excellence becomes a shared responsibility. 

Mark A. Crim is Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music at East Texas Baptist University. Nathan R. Templeton is Assistant Professor and Director of the Meadows Principal Improvement Program in the Department of Educational Administration at Texas A&M University Commerce.

## Committed to Music Education

Since Casio's entry into the music business over 35 years ago, Casio has been dedicated to creating instruments that inspire musicians. The tradition continues today, as Casio provides the industry's most progressive, feature rich keyboards and digital pianos. Since all Casio full sized keyboards also come bundled with the power supply, they offer a superior value as well. As budgets get tighter, choose the brand that will take your music further, choose Casio.



88-Note Weighted Action  
Privia PX-160 Digital Piano  
\$499

88-Note Weighted Action  
Privia PX-860 Console Digital Piano  
\$999



[www.casiomusicgear.com](http://www.casiomusicgear.com)

**CASIO**