

“We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.”

“Not all answers come from the podium.”

Dr. Richard Blatti – Ohio State University

“Pride makes us artificial... Humility makes us real.”

Coaches of Excellence

Mentorship. Who needs a mentor?

First of all we have to decide why we are here. Is it for the students or for ourselves? Are we giving the very best to our students? How better can we engage them to love music, and the process of creating music???

“You can't give what you don't have.”

No one individual has all the tools/knowledge to perform at the highest level consistently. In fact, most of us, if we were truly honest would admit to a feeling or sense of inadequacy in some area of our professional career - How many of you non-percussionists can help your students to tune the timpani? Those woodwind specialists in the room, can you diagnose a horn embouchure endurance issue? And you brass people that grace the presence of the earth, what is the best way to scrape a reed in order to get your oboe player to play that high g# in tune with the alto sax?

And if I were completely transparent, most if not all of you would agree with me that the thought of having that expert someone come into my rehearsal or performance and critique my band immediately creates an anxiety... and the thought of having extra rehearsals becomes a very real necessity. Why???
Because I do not want anyone to see my faults/weaknesses/inadequacies/lack of knowledge, or skills.

What gets in our way?

Three erroneous things that we try to convince ourselves about.

1. My situation is unique!

Nobody else has the problems that I have. Nobody else is missing an oboe player in the band. Nobody else only has one horn and he's trying to play it right-handed. Nobody else has parents that are helicoptering over my bandroom. Nobody else has financial constraints that hinder me putting instruments in my students hands or music on the stands. Wrong!!!! I can walk into any school anywhere and know where the bandroom is just by the smell of the old valve oil coming down the hall. Anyone else in this room have meddling, obnoxious parents. Surely, most of you have solved your budget issues and are satisfied with the monies you control.

The truth is that - You are unique, but your situation isn't! By saying that you're situation is unique, you are making an excuse not to seek out wise counsel and allow the status quo.

2. If only I had _____, then I would be happy with my band program. You fill in the blank. Would it be "a balanced instrumentation? ...a flute section with matching, open-holed Powell flutes? ...a principal who understands my situation of having to compete with academic classes to allow students to schedule band each year?"

Answer this... If you had what you think you really need to be satisfied, would you then be really satisfied??? Would something else then step into that items place??? Will you really ever be satisfied??? Ask the person that you think is the most successful band director that question.

3. My secret is safe with me.
If I pretend that I have it all together no one needs to know that I don't have all the answers. **WRONG!** Your students know your weaknesses better than you do. And truth be told, there isn't one person out there in any field or occupation that knows it all.

So, what really keeps me from asking for help?

Ego! - The thing that tells me I can't ask for help because they are sure to find out that I'm an IDIOT!!!

Change the paradigm (I hate that word)

E- EVERYONE (There isn't one person that can do this job alone)

G- GAINING (acquiring, attaining, constantly learning)

O- OPINIONS / OPTIONS / OPPORTUNITIES (tools)

What might that person look like?

A MENTOR is a:

Friend	Teacher	Servant	Encourager	Helper
Guide	Manager	Positive example		Leader
Artist	Listener	Provider	Problem solver	Visionary
Partner				
Brain Stormer				

A mentor might be a colleague, friend, pastor, mechanic, college professor, student, a website, your own daughter... Anyone who might give new insight or perspective to your situation. For us as music educators, we typically look to other music educators. For music issues and concerns that seems the most appropriate since we tend to speak the same language.

In some cases a mentor is someone who is younger, and is referred to as a Reverse Mentor. Reverse mentoring refers to an older individual being mentored by someone younger on topics such as technology, social media and current trends. This was true when Scott Schlup was hired at my school found himself delicately showing me how to use Finale, Gradebook, Blackboard, Microsoft Office, and email without being demeaning and containing his over-powering urge to guffaw uncontrollably. (This actually was a daily occurrence.)

“If you think the way you used to think, you’ll do the things you used to do.”

Resources:

Handbook for the Music Mentor. Colleen Conway, Michael Smith, and Thomas Hodgman. GIA Publications, Inc. Chicago

Handbook for the Beginning Music Teacher. Colleen Conway and Thomas Hodgman. GIA Publications, Inc. Chicago

The 21st Century Mentor’s Handbook – Creating A Culture For Learning. Paula Rutherford. Just Ask Publications & Professional Development.

Embracing and Mentoring the New Music Educator. Mary Correia. National Association of Music Education Newsletter, May 7, 2015.