



Music education topics of interest to stimulate motivate and inspire...

It is the mission of Conn-Selmer, Inc. to provide an educational center, ongoing reference source, and support network for the professional growth of music educators. Communication between music educators is vital for the expansion of new ideas and techniques. By providing resources and opportunities that enhance the classroom experience, we hope to provide music educators with more time to focus on performance, more positive outcomes for teachers and student, and overall growth in music education opportunities.

The Leadership Imperative

Submitted by Amanda Drinkwater

One of the most invigorating and gratifying aspects of our roles as music educators is the opportunity to connect and collaborate with our STUDENT LEADERSHIP organization. This eager, wide-eyed pack of young enthusiasts can positively impact and revitalize many areas of our programs if given the chance.

An active student leadership corps is not merely an ancillary group of devotees willing to move chairs and stands at our beckoning. Given collective positivity, a modicum of training, and a measure of opportunity, this assemblage of our best and brightest can literally make ALL the difference in our programs.

What compels students to serve our programs in leadership roles?

Most students naturally WANT to be helpful, though motivators vary extensively in substance and multiplicity as students grow older. Think of the exuberant volunteerism of kindergartners when asked to clean up after arts & crafts hour-- these children are incredibly excited about participating in what would be considered a tedious task by the end of their 7th grade year.

What is their motivation?

Their motivation is the promise of PRAISE and REWARD, of course! Kindergartners are THRILLED with the prospect of a pat on the back from their teacher, the opportunity to lead the first group song, the honor of being first in line for recess, or a nice note pinned to their shirt for their mom and dad to view at home.

Older students (and adults for that matter) are similarly motivated, although there are additional vested interests. Praise must be tempered such that it does not draw the scorn of peers. Stakes become higher with regard to the expectation of reward, which may now include the hope (or presumption) of academic remuneration, advancement of role or placement in the group, or the expectation of public recognition.

While these motivators are undoubtedly self-serving, they can result positively when administered responsibly and contextually.

How can we foster student interest in serving as leaders for all the RIGHT reasons?

Our principal endeavor includes the careful maintenance of a mutually respectful environment in which constructive student contribution is commonplace. Students will lead how they believe we lead! As program directors, we must continually seek opportunities to entrust our leaders with meaningful roles, tasks and responsibilities, including items that may extend beyond our comfort zone. Our own resulting reward typically expands far beyond the risk taken, even when our young protégés misstep or falter. When the students DO let us down from time to time, we have a unique opportunity to strengthen the trust between parties by extending another opportunity their way.

How many times do we all recollect thinking to ourselves as young minions in the flock of our scholastic programs, "I could totally do that if he/she would let me..... in fact, I could probably do a better job in half the time."

No doubt we were probably right back in the day. Our students are at LEAST as bright and as capable as we perceived ourselves to be when we were their age!

How do we realize the full capabilities of this veritable army of potential?

What can student leaders REALLY do for our programs?

Aside from attending faculty meetings and driving the buses to contest, student leaders can readily assist with virtually any aspect of our programs. Consider these few of any number of additional possibilities:

- Facility order and cleanliness
- Equipment setup and tear down
- Concert/performance setup and tear down
- Uniform inventory management
- Music library
- Instructional assistance
- Communications
- Recruiting
- Group morale

Starting a student leadership group from scratch or changing jobs? Be patient with yourself and with your students! Consider a student leadership application and selection process that a) offers students the opportunity to understand your expectations through posted job descriptions, b) requires students to initiate or declare their own interest or candidacy in a given role, and c) includes some form of contractual agreement that ultimately enables the program director to make adjustments easily if necessary. Consider including administrators and parents in all related communications and in any contractual agreement.

What can our student leaders do for our programs? The response is unique to each of us, formulated only by our own imaginations and limited only by our own apprehensions.

Consideration of the limitless possibilities?

That is our own LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE.

"Leaders are not born, they are made. They are made just like anything else... through hard work.

That's the price we have to pay to achieve that goal or any goal." Vince Lombardi



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