

How to Have a Successful Marching Band Season

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Overview

This clinic will present ideas on proper planning and implementation of a successful marching band season.

Topics to discuss:

- Logistical and rehearsal preparation
 - Adjudication criteria
 - Arranging
 - Recruiting/Retention
 - Time management
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How do you define success - the old adages...

"If you're not first, you're last." - Ricky Bobby

"Lots and lots of trophies. Nothing says success like plastic and laminated particle board. There is no better payoff than a shelf full of dust-collecting icons that reduce the beauty of human artistry to a molded high-stepping majorette with a big hat" - Anonymous



How do you actually define success?

“A season where the teachers wanted to teach everyday and the members wanted to learn everyday”

- Bobby Jones

Reading Buccaneers Drum Corps Program Coordinator/Visual Designer

“Does the band smile and cheer after they perform? Are they proud of what they’re doing on the field? Do they show off the program and their show by wearing band shirts, talking about performances, etc.”

- Ryan Williams

Assistant Director of Bands, Limestone College



Student Success

- Have they achieved excellence of the show that was designed for them?
- Have they enjoyed the process of learning and performing?
- Have they learned new skills as players, performers, and if applicable leaders?

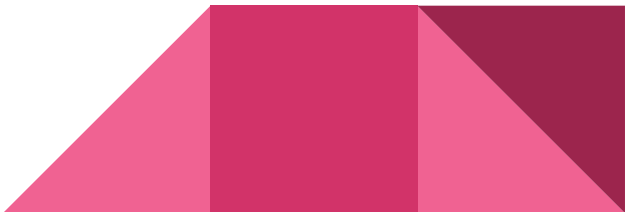


Director Success

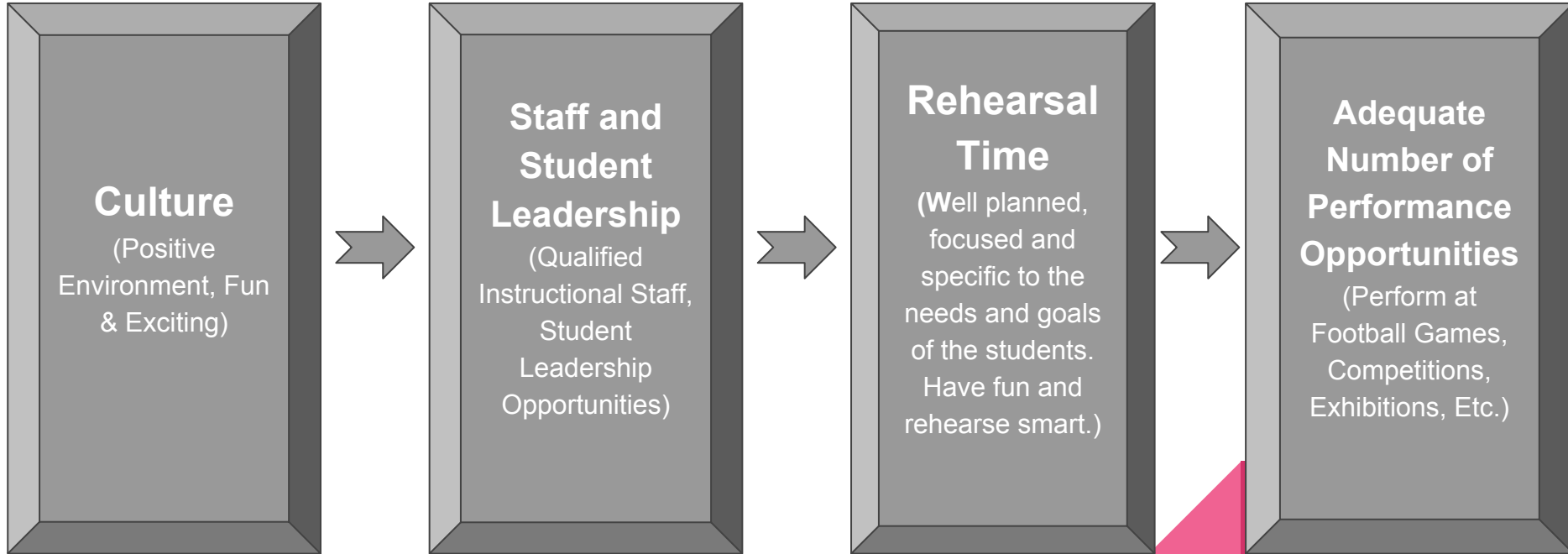
- Were you able to realize your design as intended?
- Were you able to introduce and help your students master new skills?
- Did you plan effectively enough as to minimize changes and deviations from your schedule?
- Were you able to do all this while remaining consistent in your message?
- Did you achieve/surpass the goals you set in the beginning of the season?
- Student retention?
- Always have an answer for questions
 - Be decisive, even if it means being wrong



Program Success

- Positive feedback from your audiences.
 - More students are excited to come back and bring more people with them in future seasons.
 - Overall growth of the students and the band.
 - Performance/Competitive
 - Did your audiences appreciate and enjoy your program?
 - Was the design understood, appreciated and rewarded by adjudicators?
 - Was the achievement of the students recognized?
 - Was the production rewarded competitively?
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Factors that Make a Great Marching Band



Pre-season Planning

Be Prepared - Planning is key!

Recruitment

Start early when recruiting new members!

- Look for balanced instrumentation. This will prepare your band for a better sound. You WILL need to change students to other instruments

Music Planning

Meet early with your leadership team/staff to plan what type of show you will be doing.

- Choose a genre that will best fit both your marching style as well as your audience.
- Getting rights to music can take up to a year!

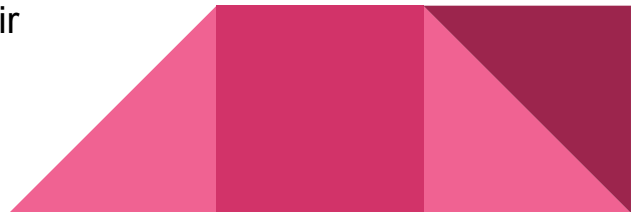
Budgeting

Be realistic when budgeting for your season. Overestimating can sometimes be just as bad as underestimating in this case.

- Make sure to leave some wiggle room for mishaps/accidents!

Preseason Planning

- Create a schedule of milestones for creative and production (i.e., writing and teaching)
- Assess student's strengths and weaknesses early, and plan your goals, process and production (i.e. repertoire and visual) around these.
- Be agile in your design and methods - don't be afraid to adapt, but do it smart - plan the changes AND how you will implement them, making sure you have scheduled enough time for the students to be comfortable with the changes and have a great shot at being successful performing them.
- Be organized at ALL times:
 - Require that you, your staff and students have binders for their music and drill



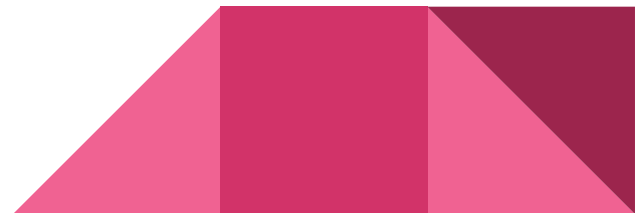
PLAN AHEAD

- Know the weather forecast and have contingency plans to avoid lost rehearsal time.
- Research your show sites and know how early to arrive, anticipate possible travel delays.
- If necessary, schedule/reserve practice facilities in advance, adjust schedules to maintain a regular and consistent rehearsal schedule. The more you can anticipate, the better it will be for all involved.
- Practice the rehearsal and performance routine if traveling
- Be consistent with your approach to teaching, message and expectations.
- Students will achieve at a higher level if they know and understand the process and expectations.
- Does your staff know what is expected of them?
 - Have you defined their roles, methods and goals?



Calendars and Communication

- The single most important attribute in any relationship is communication
- Create a website and Facebook Page that will include
- Calendars
- Recruitment Information
- Music Downloads(need to be careful with copyright issues)
- Let's take a look at an [example](#)

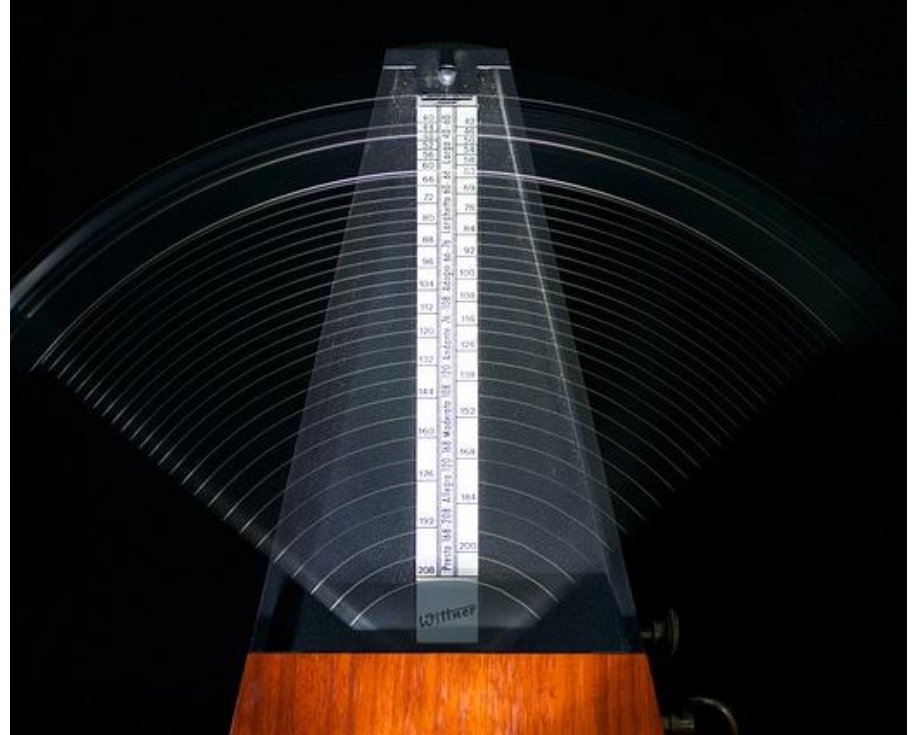


Schedule! Schedule! Schedule!

Scheduling is an essential part of success. Having an itinerary planned ahead of time will keep you and your band on track to accomplish your goals.

Never underestimate checking the weather frequently! This could change your schedule if you are not prepared.

[Band Camp Schedule Example](#)



You're Never In This Alone!

Elect a leadership team that will help with all the duties

- Drum Majors
- Section Leaders
- Non-Band Helpers

Your team should consist of people who have individual strengths

- Marching technique
- Musical Ability
- Leadership Skills



Choosing Your Marching Show

- Consider the age and ability of your band
 - With a more experienced band, choosing a more difficult show is acceptable
 - With a younger, inexperienced band, something with less individual parts may be more appropriate-Vertical scoring and limited drill movement
 - Assess the ability of the individuals in the band as well as the ensemble as a whole
- Consider the size and instrumentation of your band
 - Not all bands can have 100+ members, choose a show that suits the size of your ensemble
 - Choose a show that fits your instrumentation, brass are always going to be louder than woodwinds
- Consider the instructional level of your staff
 - Make sure all staff are on the same page
 - Choose a show your staff is comfortable teaching to the students



Copyright Monster

What are the copyright laws?

You must obtain permission to
arrange any length of music

Use a trusted copyright service such
as [Tresona Multimedia](#)



Traveling Concerns

- Consider using a music travel company
- Reserve transportation
- Acquire chaperones
- Complete all necessary paperwork (festival/competitive information, field trip forms, etc.)
- Submit seating charts, scores, any other pertinent information
- Create packing/equipment lists
- Obtain all medical forms, information, etc.



Competitive Marching	Both	Performance Marching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus is mainly based around music that highlights the ability of the band, to appeal to a set of judges ● Marching formations generally reflect the music while incorporating the difficulty ● Sometimes consist of purely Drum and Bugle Corps ● Tends to be more rigorous and disciplined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Performs at exhibitions for recruiting purposes ● Most often have a round instrumentation ● Takes lots of time and dedication to perfect their performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus mainly on entertaining the audience ● Tend to contain more well known, upbeat music to appeal to the audience ● Often contain on-field dancing ● Often participate in events such as parades and football games ● Sometimes incorporates a singer

The background is a solid pink color. In the top right corner, there is a decorative pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of pink and magenta, creating a geometric, stepped effect.

Marching is only
HALF of the show!

Turn your focus to the music!

- Choose music that fits the band like a glove
 - Understand your instrumentation
 - Understand the skill level of the band
- Assess the strengths of your band by assessing individuals, then the ensemble as a whole.
- Focus on tone, intonation, articulation, and other basic skills that will make the music sound like more than just dots on a page.



Tips for improving musicality

- Make and use a music technique packet that includes long tones, articulation exercises, and scales in the keys of the show.
- If you want your band to sound the same as your concert band, you must rehearse the same technique that is taught in concert band.
- Have a good repertoire/ composer/ arranger for the band that will write to the strengths of the band.



Helpful Hints

- Always do basics every day
 - Musical technique
 - long tones
 - scales and arpeggios
 - Marching technique
 - 8 to 5 block
- Include parts of the show in your warm-up
- Make sure to schedule your season around athletics' schedule
 - The fields and parking lots may be reserved for other sports
- Write to the band's weakest section
 - Or at least hide them
- Have a vision for what's going on. What is your end goal?



Intonation in the cold weather

- Keep instruments warm by blowing into them
- Tune to the vibes. They will go sharp and the winds will go flat
- Rehearse in the cold/elements to prepare the students



Practice Performance

- Recreate your performance arena on the rehearsal field
 - Rehearse entering, exiting, performing and timing
- Record and assess your rehearsals as an ensemble and assess using the competitive circuit's grading criteria
 - If non-competitive use adjudication criteria



Adjudication Criteria

Determine Your Target Audience and Adjudication Criteria

Football Band

Poll the audience and students to see what music they like
Determine what the audience thought you did well in prior years

Competitive Band

Determine the competitive circuit and create the show based on that circuit's evaluation criteria



Recruitment/Retention

The best way to recruit and retain students...

- Empower them
- Make it something that they “WANT” to do
- Create intrinsic ideas for motivation
- Consult directors with “successful” program to model your program after what they have found successful



Arranging and Drill Writing

Should you arrange the music and write your own drill?

Ask yourself...

- Why would you do this?
- Are you qualified?
- Do you want to learn? If so, who is your teacher, coach, mentor?
- Is it easier to hire arrangers and drill writers or purchase the product?



Helpful Hints

Arranging

- Determine range and ability level
- Give ample wind rest time
- Learn how to score for marching band
- Become familiar with music notation software

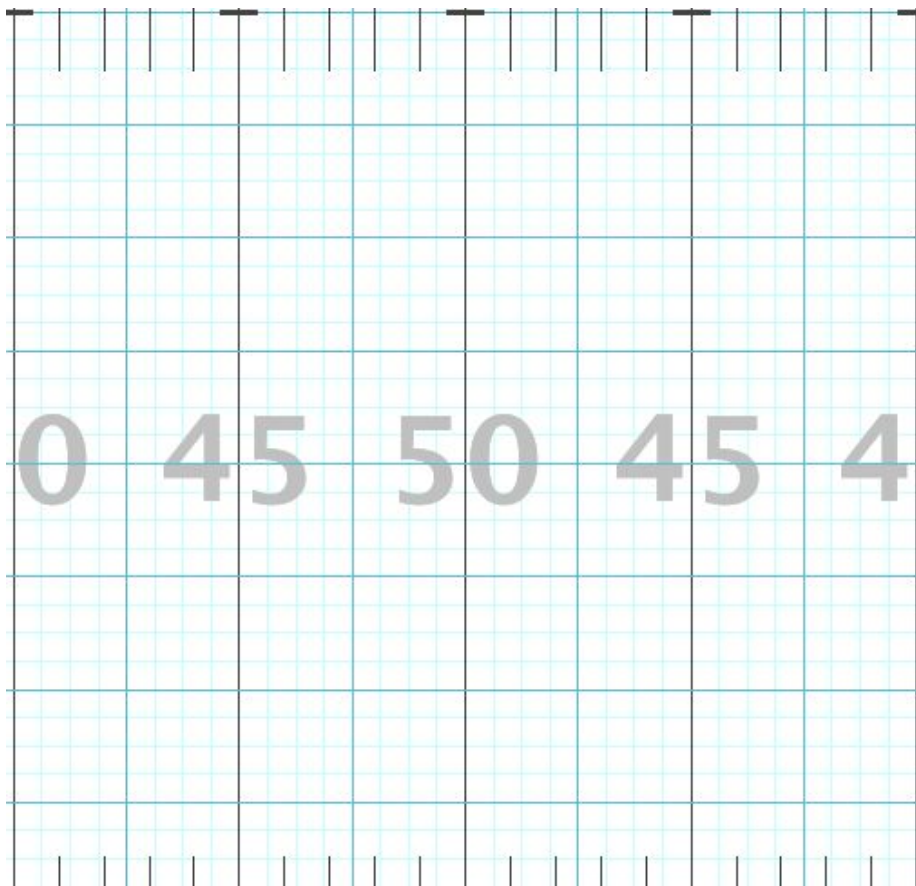


Arranging

Know your ability level

Create tick marks on your rehearsal field and write drill to the grid

Become familiar with drill writing software



Time Management

Balance and Emotional Quotient

As a director...

- Learn to take a step back
- Gain patience
- Think about what is most important during the season and revisit your initial mission statement/goals
- Think about preseason planning



Time Management

- Establish how many hours a week of rehearsal is appropriate for your students
- What is your end goal?
- Can it be achieved within those time constraints?
- If not, how can you change the season/show to fit your goals
- Create a master rehearsal schedule and master to do list - see example



Electronics & Amplification

Electronics & Amplification Pros and Cons

Pros

- Done well it will enhance the ensemble's sound and add a color
- Will give new equipment to the music program
- Will add a new dimension to the ensemble and make the ensemble contemporary

Cons

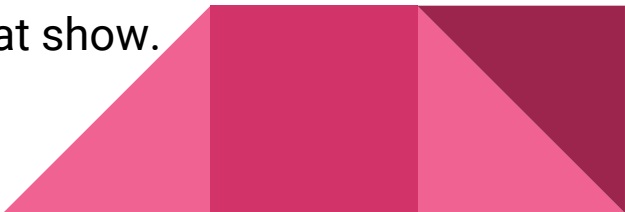
- Done poorly it will detract from the band's overall performance
- Can be expensive
- What do if it rains or gets wet?
- Will need electricity, inverter or generator

A Recap

When asked to describe 5 items that will guarantee a successful marching band season...

- 100% - Stressed that planning and proactivity is key, planning rehearsals, goals, schedules, and music selection will reduce mishaps later in the season.
- 91% - Focused on musical and marching technique in order to put on the best performance possible.
- 86% - Stressed early recruitment and hyping up the participants
- 95% - Stressed the importance of picking a show for both your audience and your current and prospective participants.

and lastly,

- 100% - Acknowledged that you need to make it fun. If the kids want to be there, they will give it their all every time and you will get a great show.
- 

After planning, put the show together and start gathering music.

These 3 R's will help keep your rehearsals on track so you can achieve your goals.



Take the time to teach both musical and marching technique. It is time well spent!

You will get the most success when the students are just as excited about the show as you are.

Thank You!

Questions???

Thank you to all of the educators
who assisted in compiling this
information!
