

Marching Band Blues: Leadership Development in a Practical Key

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Learning objectives:

- Communicate the unique challenges of providing quality leadership to a multi-faceted and diverse group of collegiate musicians.
- Describe the curriculum development process, elements used, and sequencing of teaching
- Share the results/learnings that have occurred to date

Professional Biographical Profile of Presenters

Jeffrey P. Miller, Ph.D.
President, Innovative Leadership Solutions

Jeff Miller is President and Senior Educator for Innovative Leadership Solutions, a company that believes in the power of individuals to transform themselves, their communities, and their organizations through personal and team learning. He has been a member of the educational facilitation team with the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, an associate of the Cascade Center for Community Governance, and Interim Executive Director for the Community Leadership Association. Jeff is an adjunct professor in the University of Indianapolis MBA program.

He has an array of experiences in organizations, change, and human capacity building efforts. His workshops and instruction include topics of collaboration development, staff development, strategic visioning, program design, planning, and evaluation. He has served as Assistant Director of the North Dakota State University Extension Service with responsibilities for the 4-H Youth Development Program. In this role he served as the administrator responsible for the vision, leadership, and management of the largest volunteer and youth-development organization in North Dakota. For three years, Jeff served as convener for the *National Network for Collaboration*, a consortium of 20 land-grant universities. Jeff is co-author of “*Effective Collaboration: Strategies for Pursuing Common Goals.*”

Brad McDavid, PhD.

Director – University of Washington Husky Marching Band

Dr. Brad McDavid is currently Director of Athletic Bands at the University of Washington. His primary duties as director of the renowned 240-member Husky Marching Band include principal field conductor, show coordinator, and program administrator. In addition to serving as coordinator of one of the most comprehensive athletic band programs in the country, Dr. McDavid also serves as conductor of the university's Symphonic Band.

A native of Centerburg, Ohio, he has previously taught at the elementary, middle school and high school levels while teaching in the public schools of Central Ohio and Tempe, Arizona. Brad received his Bachelors Degree in Music Education from The Ohio State University and Masters of Music Degree from Arizona State University. In 1999 he received his PhD in Music Education also from Ohio State. He has also held the position of graduate assistant director for the Purdue University band program.

McDavid has also served as clinician, adjudicator and guest conductor throughout the United States including Australia and China. In addition to being a member of CBDNA, MENC and the Washington Music Educators Association he also currently holds the position of Western District Governor for the national college band service fraternity, Kappa Kappa Psi. McDavid also serves on the selection committees for the Sousa Foundation's Sudler Trophy and Sudler Shield, which recognize excellence among high school and collegiate marching bands.

Abstract

Collegiate marching bands are diverse, multi-faceted organizations requiring excellence in leadership at every level. Each year, student members are selected and immediately expected to provide quality leadership in the management of sections and squads in support of the professional staff. This paper provides the background and strategies used to strengthen the leadership capabilities of the entire organization. Lessons learned are applicable to any large group experience, particularly when there is continual turnover of members and leaders.

Introduction

Student leadership in the daily running of collegiate marching bands is not only vital to the success of the organization, but is also a valuable learning experience for the students as they prepare for organizational and community life beyond the university.

Each season hundreds of young people between the ages of 19 and 22 are asked to step into roles of responsibility and authority in the daily functioning of collegiate marching bands. In many instances these students find themselves not properly prepared to effectively handle this new role. They are being asked to assume roles of teacher, human resource consultant, evaluator, coach, problem solver, motivator, and disciplinarian.

Given the challenge of coordinating the schedules of busy student leaders, busy marching band directors, and the oddities of a football schedule, what can we as educators do to make sure our student leaders have some preparation for the season ahead? It ultimately is in the long-term interest of the band's success to budget time and dollars up-front to provide baseline training to these "budding young leaders". Because students typically serve in leadership roles for 2-3 years, development of a curriculum rotation is an important consideration so that new and more advanced skills can be gained.

Background/How it Works

Over the past 10 years the University of Washington Husky Marching Band has evolved a training regime that went from virtually non-existent, to the scheduling of a 1 ½ - day pre-season retreat for new and repeating squad and section leaders. The planned curriculum includes a refresher course in the fundamentals of marching band techniques, and time to answer questions and model anticipated challenges. This includes the discussion of issues, and concerns the students and staff might have for the coming season. The majority of training time is devoted to helping the student leaders prepare for the variety of "people challenges" that will occur in the coming season.

Two foundational curriculum packages are used in a two-year rotation. The first package used is the *True Colors*™ temperament/personality styles tool. Through thoughtful facilitation and instruction the students are given new insights into their own individual strengths and style preferences as well as perspectives on how to more effectively work with those who have different styles.

True Colors™ uses the metaphor of color to identify four distinct perspectives and personality styles. Each color represents a dimension of an individual's character. It takes the complexity of the Myers-Briggs 16 types and reduces them to four easy to remember and understand categories. The understanding of their own true colors and the colors of their fellow band members brings about a new awareness in their own abilities as well as those of the individuals they are expected to lead. Significant time is spent in instruction as to how this information can be applied in the effective teaching and leading of a musical section.

The second foundational curriculum package used is the "Leadership Challenge". The curriculum has been developed from the research of Kouzes & Posner. The students spend time with each of *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* identified by Kouzes & Posner. The students do some self-assessment, identify their stronger leadership abilities and which skills are less developed. They then work through a series of activities that allow them to articulate how the various Practices of Exemplary Leadership are put to use in the Husky Marching Band. Time is also spent in identifying the gaps, and how they can be addressed.

Additional curriculum elements that are used as bridging activities and for additional team building purposes include:

- Pieces from: *Building Team Spirit* by Barry Heerman.

- Various experiential/group problem solving activities picked up over the years at recreational laboratories (including elements from “Group Dynamite” by Michigan State University Extension.

Results to Date

The consensus among students and staff alike is that the students now go into each season with the confidence and the tools to carry out the responsibilities of their positions more effectively. Just as important, is the fact that even if they don't feel adequately prepared to handle a situation, they at least have the skills to identify potential problem areas. This allows the staff to be proactive in addressing challenges that inevitably occur during the course of a season. Ultimately the most exciting result of the program is that it allows the staff to not only develop the musical potential of each member but also the leadership and social skills of many of the students as well.

Conclusions and Future Implications

Much more work is needed in terms of mid-season and post-season follow-up evaluation. The constant turnover of student leaders presents a challenge for long-term evaluation that has not yet been solved. Additional curriculum development is in order for helping student leaders learn how to deal with the challenge of peer pressure. Most of the student leaders are being asked to provide leadership (and at times make very difficult decisions)

More work is needed in terms of mid-season and post-season follow-up evaluation. Restrictions of time and budget have prevented that from occurring to date. The constant turnover of student leaders presents a challenge for long-term evaluation that has not yet been solved. Additional curriculum development is in order for helping student leaders learn how to deal with the challenge of peer pressure. Most of the student leaders are being asked to provide leadership (and at times make very difficult decisions) with groups that often have close friends. The dilemma of having to make unpopular decisions or lead the group in a direction they don't like is one of those opportunities for deeper learning that must be addressed.