If I Were a Band Director

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by James Logsdon

In setting forth my views on what I would do if I were a band director, I shall attempt to look at the band director and his job through the eyes of an administrator. I believe that this scrutiny will be objective, friendly, and encouraging...

What Would I Do if I Were the Band Director?

First, if I were band director, I would support the contention that my activity has inherent values worthy of inclusion in a program of general education.

There are those who doubt this. I do believe that the time is now here when it is necessary to point out certain values, a few of which I shall attempt to explore.

Music is an activity for leisure. I feel that some music educators are apologetic with respect to this value. I deplore this attitude. Our society is such that the wise use of leisure will be an increasing problem. Music can help fill the void.

Music has an ennobling effect. Someone has said that youngsters who are participating in good music are not likely to be numbered among the delinquents. One study some years ago confirmed this philosophy. I do believe that music is a wholesome, emotional expression and should be a part of the experience of every youngster.

Music developments have paralleled the changes within the structure of American life. Music has been a basic part of the American heritage. It should have an integral part in the general education program for every student, whether he is in elementary or the high school.

Secondly—if I were the band director, I would insist that my activity be scheduled at a time when representative students could accept it as a free choice.

Most band directors who have served in more than one position during their career will find that this has a familiar ring. The values to be gained from participation are such that no interested student should be denied the privilege of belonging, particularly if the denial is a result of failure to plan the program intelligently.

Third—if I were the band director, I would attach significance to my subject as being one of the school’s contributions to the program for developing the talents of students.

Music and athletics led the field for many years in making special provisions for students with special abilities. With in recent years, it seems to me that giftedness has come to be associated with academic superiority in the traditional disciplines, particularly mathematics and science. No one would question the wisdom of placing great emphasis upon producing talented and creative scientists and mathematicians. There is some question as to whether this emphasis contributes materially to the solution of some of the world’s most distressing current problems. In any system-wide program of study pertaining to talent development’s general area should be represented, and its methods should be based on the fact that its students are talented.

Fourth—if I were the band director, I would regard myself as an integral part of teaching staff.

If my area had been losing ground as a result of pressures from the so-called academic disciplines, I would wonder whether I might be partly at fault. The characteristics of the music teaching program, which involves usually both individual and group instruction, are such that there is a tendency to withdraw from participating actively in the professional activities of the local teaching staff. When committees are formed to perform specific functions, whether it is music or not, all too often the band director finds himself either uninterested or unavailable. I know that the performing aspects of his work are such that heavy demands are made on his time and energy. It is necessary, however, if I am a band director, to concern myself with the general problems that confront the school.

Fifth—if I were the band director, I would constantly strive to improve my qualifications in the field of liberal arts. I have been stuck many times by the number and extent of specialized courses in the field of music per se. I do not discount the necessity for artistry in individual performance or group conducting. I do know, however, that it is necessary for the band director to establish and maintain proper communication with those who are often musically illiterate. It seems to me, then that his own preparation in the general field of liberal arts should be more extensive than that which has been traditionally required.

Sixth—if I were the band director, I would align myself with those forces which are engaged in preserving the traditional values of the system of education in the United States.

It seems apparent that, as a profession, we must insist that all of the children of all of the people have a right to an education. The entire profession needs to present a united front if our educational program is to be preserved and expanded to meet the needs that characterize the space age.

The band director has both the qualifications and the obligation to speak out on behalf of our total educational system. With the possible exception of athletics, the school bands have succeeded in obtaining more news coverage than any other phase of the school program. Through cooperation with civic groups and patriotic organizations, the band director has a traditional reservoir of good will. He is known and admired throughout the community. I trust he will accept the challenge to assume the professional obligation to represent all education at its very best.

I hope that I have said enough to convince you that through the eyes of this administrator, you have a contribution to make; not only to the curricular aspect of the program of general education, but also to the welfare of our total profession and the educational experiences of our boys and girls.