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50 Directors Who Make a Difference

Music educators occupy a unique position in our school systems. In addition to being teachers in the traditional sense, they must also be coaches and mentors. Often under-funded and stationed in secluded and remote rehearsal areas, band and orchestra directors are charged with the perfunctory task of teaching music. In between the cracks of this blunt description are the concepts of: discipline – an element required to achieve the technical sophistication needed to perform music; teamwork – a prerequisite for ensemble playing; and passion – the subtext and soul of music.

There's no one way to achieve this lofty goal of instilling in children a love and appreciation for music, performance, and dedication. And, likely, there are few identical teaching situations: socioeconomic and other cultural factors weigh heavily into shaping each one of our nation's classrooms. In that respect, it is fitting that the 50 directors honored in this report represent each facet of the wide spectrum of schools throughout the 50 states. Indeed, these exemplary music educators come from all walks of life and teach in classrooms of all shapes and sizes. However, through it all, they are unified by the positive impact they have on the lives of their students.

Without further ado, SBO is proud to present the 11th annual "50 Directors Who Make a Difference."



ALABAMA

Rusty Courson

Director of Bands
Smiths Station High School
Smiths Station

Years at School: 15

Total Years Teaching: 20

Students in Program: 350

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I am a huge believer in selling kids on the fact that they'll get much more satisfaction out of everything that they participate in if they'll just do it because it's the right thing to do. If you have to do something because you were made to do it, you'll never receive the same level of satisfaction. We're here to teach music, but students get so many other benefits from participating in a performing ensemble, which they carry over into life after high school.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I'm sure that every director feels this way (or at least most of them), but I wouldn't trade my students for those at any other school. They're not perfect, and neither am I, but their attitude, drive, and work ethic are without question the best.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: There have been so many that it's difficult to single out one thing. I've seen my Symphonic Band perform at the Southeastern United States Concert Band Clinic at Troy University, as well as at the Alabama Music Educators Association State Conference at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Both of those performances were high points for me, knowing that my students had been selected from many applicants to perform in front of my peers. However, I think the most memorable experience came several years ago at a marching band competition. I have a policy that they should never have to ask how they did with any performance; they should know they put everything they had into their effort and left it on the field or the stage. The band had just completed an outstanding performance. After they had all crossed the back of the end zone there was a moment of silence, followed by a tremendously emotional release. I realized then that they knew it didn't matter if they won or not, because they knew they were winners, regardless of the outcome.



ALASKA

Gabrielle Willis

Director of Orchestras
Bartlett and West Anchorage High Schools
Anchorage

Years at School: 6

Total Years Teaching: 6
Students in Program: 160

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Always maintain a curious and investigative mind. Interestingly enough, good teachers often times act more like scientists than pedagogues. Teachers face the unbelievable challenge of instructing 30 or more different minds within a single classroom setting. Each child possesses a separate learning style, set of life experiences, personality traits, and attitudes. A teacher must constantly ask the following questions: By what means does this student learn best? What motivates this student to learn? How can I best connect with this student on a personal level? A good teacher never stops questioning. At a clinic, Robert Gillespie once told me, "Telling is not teaching." During my first few years as a teacher, I used to talk a lot during rehearsals. My orchestras seemed unfocused, tired, and restless. Initially, I blamed this erratic behavior on the kids. I now realize that my verbose teaching style had caused the majority of the chaos! Steve Martin once said, "Talking about music is like dancing about architecture." When teaching our students, why are words such an overused pedagogical tool? Why not help students discover the answers by demonstrating for them? Sing, play, draw, and dance the music for your students. This is a language that students understand and love.

"A good teacher never stops questioning."
 – Gabrielle Willis, Anchorage, Alaska

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Nothing inspires me more than being around passionate, motivated people. I try to surround myself with individuals who love making music and being creative. These sorts of people are colleagues, conductors, students, parents, and friends.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: For the past five years, I have directed the Hiland Mountain Correctional Center Orchestra. This is a string orchestra comprised entirely of female prison inmates. Teaching music at HMCC has been one of the greatest joys of my professional career. In 2006, a dream of mine finally came to fruition – my high school students traveled to the prison and performed a joint concert with the HMCC orchestra. It was an incredibly moving and inspiring experience for everyone involved. Students from both orchestras learned a great lesson that day – our commonalities far outweigh our differences, especially when it comes to making music.



ARIZONA

Toby Curtright
 Director of Bands
 Pinnacle High School
 Phoenix

Years at School: 2

Total Years Teaching: 12

Students in Program: 235

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Knowing what interests your students and then meeting them there. When I introduced a Tower of Power-type horn band and a Latin jazz group to the program, students who rarely picked up their horns outside of school were now practicing. Sure, it is Chicago and James Brown at first, but pretty soon they are practicing marching and concert music, while learning about different styles and cultures.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: To see students succeed and then to watch them go help other students succeed. With guidance from me, students are able to work together as a team to really make the program go. The process of peer education promotes unity and develops leadership skills in the classroom and on the stage and field.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: In the short time this high school has been open (about eight years) there have been a number of director changes for various reasons. Having college teaching experience I was brought in to be a recruiter, but more so, I found out, to mend an unstable program. At our spring awards concert last year, the students and parents really showed their appreciation of my efforts. I knew then that those 14-to-18-hour days were worth every minute.



ARKANSAS

Dewayne Dove
 Director of Symphonic Band
 Russellville High School
 Russellville

Years at School: 11

Total Years Teaching: 19
Students in Program: 200

KEYS TO SUCCESS: One of the most important keys to success is to have a school district and administration that is supportive of the music program. The individual teacher must also have a desire to serve and to teach. They should have the attitude that it is not about them, but about the students.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The students that I get to work with on a daily basis inspire me. I really like teaching and interacting with them every day.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Probably my eighth-grade band's performance at our Region Playing Contest in 1997. This particular class was very talented but lazy. I had decided that I was going to push them to play harder music for the contest. It reached the point that they were either going to learn it or it would get shoved down their throats. After all of the work and preparation, the performance was outstanding and the students came away knowing that they had performed very well. They had also played the hardest program that our eighth grade bands had ever performed. This same band, when they were seniors, requested to play their eighth-grade contest tunes for their final concert because it meant so much to them.



CALIFORNIA

Gregory Whitmore

Director of Bands
Cathedral City High School
Cathedral City

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 9

Students in Program: 120

KEYS TO SUCCESS: The keys to success, as a music educator, must be a belief in and commitment to making great music. I believe that despite the educational level that we may find ourselves in, we must be intent on providing our students with great music at their level. Furthermore, at the high school level, it is imperative that we model ourselves, as conductors, and our programs after the collegiate wind bands. As we look to set the music making course for our ensembles, we should ask ourselves how we can emulate the sounds, concert programming, literature selection, et cetera of our collegiate counterparts. I firmly believe that success as a music educator involves a firm commitment to the continuation of the development of self as a musician and conductor. Attend conducting clinics, symposia, concerts of university bands and professional orchestras at every opportunity. Study the great scores of the wind band repertoire. Keep in contact with great conductors, composers, and study all of the arts. I also feel that success as a music educator involves a belief in the potential of young musicians and an unyielding commitment to excellence from them both as musicians and as people.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am continually inspired by the enormous potential of young musicians. It is such an enriching feeling to work with young people who are committed to the disciplined art of music making, especially with all of the modern, instant activities that young people have at their disposal. Hearing students perform a piece in concert that has undergone the rigors of the preparation process or witnessing their performance on the marching field after the sweat and toil of rehearsal is always a fulfilling moment for me as a music educator.

Furthermore, I am energized when I hear from former students who have continued to keep music in their lives either as students of music, enthusiastic patrons, or community ensemble members. The opportunity to create a living, breathing thing called music as a profession is a further inspiration. Having the opportunity to create an experience with students through music performance that will last long beyond their time in the band room, knowing that they are engaged and excited to be in the process with me as their teacher, is amazing. I am further inspired by the greats in our profession. Attending a concert or rehearsal lead by H. Robert Reynolds, or hearing a fine wind ensemble or professional orchestra in concert allows me the time to artistically recharge, broaden my musical perspectives, and grow as a musician.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: On Easter of 2007, the Cathedral City High School Symphonic Band performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City. In the audience were many family, friends, my conducting teacher (Dr. James Tapia), the mayor of Cathedral City, and an enthusiastic audience of New Yorkers. The student's performance was terrific, and the audience was so moved by our music making that we were given a standing ovation. The concert was a true highlight for me as a conductor, a music educator, and a person. For our band program, this was a moment that will live forever in the history of the CCHS Bands, and the concert rallied our community around our program. To see my students eyes as we walked into Carnegie Hall for the first time, and to seem them finally realize where they were, and understand the history that they were a part of was life-changing for them and me. I will also never forget the preparation that we undertook to get

ready for the performance and the seven-day tour itself. We spent a considerable amount of time preparing literature – and the students – for not only the Carnegie Hall performance, but also for the differences in culture and lifestyle between Southern California and New York City. To date, our entire band program has grown as a result of that performance. Our music making has become more musical, and our students have an even better understanding of their own potential for excellence. As a music educator, I believe even more fervently in the power of music to change the lives of young people and the need to continue to grow personally as a musician and conductor.



COLORADO

Jason Buckingham

Director of Bands
Northglenn High School
Northglenn

Years at School: 3

Total Years Teaching: 16

Students in Program: 100

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Passion for making students successful and passion for making great sounds. Attempting every day to communicate my personal passion for music and making music. A huge part of the success of the band program at Northglenn over the last 30 years has been an exceptional booster program. Know how hard the parents work provides constant inspiration to ensure I am doing everything I can to honor their sacrifice and devotion to their children's success. Maintaining a positive, productive, and enjoyable atmosphere when working with a booster group can be a challenge, but as long as everyone one in the organization always keeps in mind why we are doing what we are doing, all sorts of issues can be overcome. I am also blessed with a great staff that has been in place for years. I was part of the staff before I became the band director, so coming into that position was an easy fit.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Seeing the students' progress and doing things that they did not think were possible, especially in terms of what they can achieve as performers. Music can be such a powerful influence. It can be a powerful tool for really learning the value of work and the value of the work of others. Being a part of that process and watching a student's progression over time is what it is all about. Also, teaching students just how much they can influence the world as performers is extremely important to me. Any performance, no matter how big or small, is an opportunity for a life changing experience for a performer and, most importantly, someone in the audience, especially if there are young kids in the audience. You never know what kind of change could happen due to a great performance.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My favorite experience as a teacher was not a single moment, but an experience I was lucky enough to share with a surprising number of former students. I was a cast member and music instructor with the original London cast of Blast! It was great fun to go through that whole run with people that I remember as young players and seeing how far they had grown as musicians and people. Being able to perform with those folks was an honor and a pleasure I will never forget.



CONNECTICUT

Haig Shahverdian

Director of Bands
Hall High School
West Hartford

Years at School: 18

Total Years Teaching: 37

Students in Program: 475

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Passion for what you do and what you believe in and the knowledge that the best work is done collaboratively with students, parents, and teachers.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Seeing and hearing an individual or ensemble discover the power of their music. It is that moment when they find their own voice that inspires me the most.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: This is so hard, but if I had to go for one moment it would be when the Hall Concert Jazz Band was on stage with Wynton Marsalis as the guest artist at IAJE in NYC. He was trading with one of the players in the band on "Perdido," and the vibe in the band and in the audience was tremendous. I did not want that moment to end.

**DELAWARE****Domenic Pisano**

Director of Bands
Concord High School
Wilmington

Years at School: 5

Total Years Teaching: 11

Students in Program: 125

KEYS TO SUCCESS: There are many, but my top five in no particular order:

Never stop going to school. Seek out and learn from great teachers. Know that many (if not all) of the music education strategies out there work; the trick is finding the strategies that reinforce your teaching strengths and supplement your weaknesses. Have a welcoming environment. In this day and age the students don't have to take music, and if the environment is threatening, they won't. It is up to you to make them want to be there. Nothing will substitute for a supportive guidance department, main office administration, and district office. More programs die in the main office than the band room. If you do this job because you love music and performing, stop. Do it because you love teaching children.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired when the students become self-sufficient and no longer need me. It is a great thing to see students running their own sectionals without being asked, or giving me a list of pieces to buy because they are starting their own quartet. Nothing inspires me more than to see students taking ownership of their own music education.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I hope it hasn't happened yet.

**FLORIDA****Alex Kaminsky**

Director of Bands
Buchholz High School
Gainesville

Years at School: 2

Total Years Teaching: 20

Students in Program: 150

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Among the many keys to success for any music educator, I have found the following three to be most important: Discipline – students must be focused and attentive in order to learn. It doesn't matter how knowledgeable the person in front of the student is if that knowledge does not have a chance to be transmitted. Fundamentals –at the core of any ensemble that performs at a high level is a solid foundation and training in fundamentals. This begins with teaching characteristic tone production in all ranges at all volumes – an ongoing process. Persistence – there must always be a commitment from the music educator to teach students how to attain the highest level of excellence in all facets of music making. The standard of excellence must be high – in fact, higher than the students are capable of achieving at that time in order to keep them striving for their highest.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired by seeing students reach their potential. Most students do not know that their potential is their greatest untapped resource. When they are given the tools necessary to tap deep into that resource, a wonderful metamorphosis begins to take place as they are empowered to strive in a way they haven't before.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I have to say that my most memorable moment was the performance my band gave at the 2005 Midwest Clinic. As I was conducting, I realized that these students were collectively achieving something that they never could have on their own. I needed them, and they needed me, and we all needed each other to create the music that was coming off of that stage. Any culmination of diligent and heartfelt preparation is memorable.

**GEORGIA****David Starnes**

Director of Bands
Kennesaw Mountain High School

Marietta

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 21

Students in Program: 250

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe that the greatest key to success as a music educator lies in the ability of a teacher to never stop learning, questioning, experimenting, and thinking outside the box of possibility. I think as teachers, it is very easy to fall into a yearly routine. As a result, our ensembles' growth can flat-line, causing expectations of sound, selection of literature, and our own personal growth as a conductor to become an occupation. This is particularly evident in programs that achieve success where maintaining becomes the challenge. Inspiring students is a large part of being a music educator today when kids have so many choices about how they want to spend their time outside of their academic subjects. I always stress to students, as well as new teachers, something that I continue to live by. Your potential is constantly evolving. The better you get, the higher your bar of potential moves.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: It's all about the kids. I wish there was something more profound I could offer, but that is it. I look at each year as a blank canvas where a complete picture will appear by year's end. I never really know what the picture will look like, but continue to add to it until I am satisfied with the final painting. The music is the motivation, and I try to approach each day with a mindset that the students are expecting my best and will always be able to tell if they don't get it. I truly believe inspiration comes from within a great teacher. Without insight, inspiration is accidental. You have to want those moments to occur that inspire you to teach music, and that takes planning and a lot of dreaming. Teachers can create an environment where anything is possible if they don't teach the final exam. It is a journey that needs to be experienced and reflected upon daily. The inspired teacher will relive moments from each day that will build into the next day's planning. I believe that every teaching strategy that works, whether in a college textbook or not, should be used, modified and experimented with, until you create a system that not only challenges you as a teacher, but inspires both student and teacher alike.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: When I was offered the job at Kennesaw Mountain High School in 2000. I had been a teacher at the middle school level and assistant at the high school level for 12 years, waiting on my first director of bands position. I am honored to teach in the Cobb County School District, which is loaded with great teachers and where one could wait years to become a head director at the high school level. I knew that I was going into uncharted territory at Kennesaw Mountain, as it was a new school in the district and the first high school to be opened in 10 years. I wanted to make sure I did everything right. I didn't, but I tried to the best of my ability. My music supervisor and good friend, Gary Markham, told me it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to open a new high school. All the traditions and procedures would begin based on my decisions, good or bad. This moment taught me what responsibility to my job was all about and that nothing rewarding comes without hard work and sacrifice.

HAWAII

Dennis Kaneshiro

Director of Marching Band

Kalani High School

Honolulu

Years at School: 16

Total Years Teaching: 16

Students in Program: 210

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe one of the keys to success in music education is sharing the passion for music with your students. You must continuously seek new teaching methods, expand your music repertoire, and know your students' abilities. Although it may be challenging to deal with parents who question your philosophy, students who show little respect, dwindling funds for the arts, and long hours, it is something you have to endure. In the end, you know you are teaching the students life lessons, which they will be able to build upon for the rest of their lives.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: As a music educator, I have the privilege of teaching the same students for four years. I am able to see the students grow from teenagers into young adults. I work with them and teach them lessons that they will be able to use for the rest of their lives. Responsibility, accountability, teamwork, and leadership are the key skills that I hope to instill.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My most memorable moment as a teacher happened when I was out of the country one summer for a month. Due to my absence, I was not able to have marching band rehearsals. The student leadership took it upon themselves to organize rehearsals without my knowledge, and they did a superb job. This event opened my eyes and defined how I now run my program. Most of the marching band responsibilities are now in the hands of the student leaders, who have ultimate ownership of the program.

**IDAHO****Gordon P. Smith**

Director of Instrumental Music
Jerome High School & Jerome Middle School
Jerome

Years at School: 3**Total Years Teaching:** 25**Students in Program:** 290

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I tell the students the first day that we have two products: great performances and great people. Yes, we want to succeed on the stage, on the field, and in the gym, but, to be frank, the performances would be slightly improved if I were to be the control freak my personality dictates and make every decision for the students. But the more I give the kids in terms of creative freedom and control in planning, show design, rehearsal organization, and simple responsibility, within reason, the more the students gain from the experience and the more their character and real-world skill sets develop. Each field show the marching unit performs is home-grown, developed with student input, and so they invest more of themselves into it. Beyond that, success is what every good teacher in every field knows. We teach children, not subject matter. Treat every student as an individual with unique needs, and realize that as the one teacher they see year after year, more than one period a day, you're their de facto faculty advisor, and help them through adolescence as best you can.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Both of my parents were teachers, and I learned most of what I know from them, both at home and in their classrooms. In fact, the reason I started teaching was to help my mother in the last year before her death from cancer, when she was too weak to teach a full day. The experience turned me towards a career in education. I learned so much from my own high school band director, Clyde Quick, whose priorities were never the trophies or even the music as much as the people and the relationships between them. I've also had the benefit of the friendship of Idaho teachers like Dave Wells at Boise State, as well as high school directors like Phil DuBose and Steve Floyd, who share similar philosophies. I have a host of superb administrators, colleagues, parents, and students who continue to help me grow as a professional. Of course, everything a family man does is primarily to make his wife and children proud, and I learn from Wendy and my kids every day.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: The easy answer would be watching my students become successful adults, but tangibly the event I'm most pleased to have been a part of was bringing the Dallas Brass to Jerome in January. We not only sold out a 900-seat hall in this small town and cleared \$4,000 for new uniforms when few thought we would break even, but we raised the perception of the arts in the community and the schools, as well as the sights of those in our program to higher goals. And getting to conduct the Brass, with the high school band performing a composition of my own, was a thrill as well. I hope, though, that my proudest accomplishment is yet to come. After all, I'm still young and learning.

**ILLINOIS****Greg Bimm**

Director of Bands
Marion Catholic High School
Chicago Heights

Years at School: 32**Total Years Teaching:** 35**Students in Program:** 260

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I feel that there are three general things. First, hard work – you must be willing to work longer hours than pretty much any other teacher, and then spend still more time working to learn scores and how to help your students to perform them. Second, the students must always remain the primary focus in all you do. Finally, remain an artist. Never stop pursuing technique, musical and educational, and never stop loving music.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Teachers who have remained in the trenches and have not compromised standards and watching students grow to be great people and lovers of music.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: It is hard to say. It could be playing at the first concert band festival for some of the great band icons, or it could be experiencing my son and daughter as band members and having them share music with me every day. There are also so many memories of the quiet victories in students' lives.

**INDIANA****Thomas Barker**

Director of Bands
Lafayette Jefferson High School
Lafayette

Years at School: 21

Total Years Teaching: 31

Students in Program: 250

KEYS TO SUCCESS: We have such a unique and incredible opportunity to work with students – many for more than a year – and help them in so many ways. In my eyes, a successful music educator not only teaches students about music and the incredible power it possesses, but about life and how, through music, they can be a better person. Teaching is hard work. It requires patience, time, persistence, organization, and a willingness to continually be a student yourself. It takes tremendous dedication and a very unselfish attitude. If you think you are the most important person in your program, trust me, you are not, and the kids will let you know that. Above all, a good sense of humor always helps.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Lots of things inspire me. My Jefferson band family, the students, parents, and staff, both past and present, have inspired me. My own family, my colleagues and their programs, great music, and my former teachers have all inspired me. My administration who gives me the tools and the trust to do what is right, also contributes to my inspiration. I enjoy seeing my students get it, be it a new skill, a new understanding of a concept, or just seeing the successes that they get from their involvement in the band program. I have been truly blessed to have some great students. They have, over the years, achieved many honors and awards, but the daily classroom progress and achievements that can happen bring me back every day.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: This is a very tough question as I have had so many great moments as a teacher and each of them is significant. They are significant because they involved so many great students in different situations. To single out one moment is very hard. However, one of the most recent memorable moments was after my marching band had finished performing at Pearl Harbor. I found out that while we were performing there was a military funeral being held on board the USS Missouri. The wife of the soldier being laid to rest found my secretary and said that the family could hear the band playing "God Bless America" during the burial service. She wanted us to know how meaningful that was for her family. When I told my students of this experience, it brought full circle the power of music, and I had the honor of being there with my band family.

**IOWA****Terry Hanzlik**

Director of Bands
Abraham Lincoln High School
Council Bluffs

Years at School: 10

Total Years Teaching: 33

Students in Program: 86

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Teachers need to understand that it takes years to build a program at a school. You must start with a philosophy that is reflected in a good curriculum and then follow it. It can take years to change a program. Music teachers need to have a passion for what they do, a work ethic that is second to none, and more patience than anyone will ever give you credit for.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Student success. Starting with a very basic skill and developing a final product that everyone is proud of.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I have too many memories to list just one or two. My favorite moments recently have been visiting with my former students and seeing how they have grown as human beings and the thought that a small part of their lives, their attitudes, discipline and beliefs have been influenced by you. Many of them are now parents, professional musicians, and teachers.

**KANSAS**

Marion Roberts

Director of Bands
Blue Valley North High School
Overland Park

Years at School: 22

Total Years Teaching: 38

Students in Program: 200

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Fascination with and inspiration from people and music.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: My wife, students, and the music itself inspire me.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Performing with students on Omaha Beach at the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion and watching the reaction of the veterans and the students while the music was being performed. I should also include the 60th anniversary at Port-en-Beson. When we had just completed a work, a salute was fired far off-shore, and one of my students played "Taps," followed by the band playing "Irish Tune" from County Derry. Performing a Christmas Concert at Baker University when my one-year-old son came to the stage, I held him and finished the concert. Music makes all of what we do memorable.

**KENTUCKY****Tim Allen**

Band Director
Adair County High School
Columbia

Years at School: 28

Total Years Teaching: 28

Students in Program: 250

KEYS TO SUCCESS: A decent level of competency, a good ear, and a preconceived idea about what a good characteristic sound quality is for every instrument. Having high expectations and making sure students understand what those expectations are. Don't avoid obstacles. Work on the things that give you trouble, not the things that are going well.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: To never be satisfied with mediocrity. There is a standard in my head that inspires me to keep pushing until I reach or come close to reaching that standard.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: To see a trumpet player who could not reach a middle F concert for two years eventually earn a spot in the all-state band.

**LOUISIANA****Joseph Nassar**

Assistant Director of Bands
St. Amant High School
St. Amant

Years at School: 9 years

Total Years Teaching: 12 years

Students in Program: 230

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I really believe that it is vital that we create a working and learning atmosphere where the students are grounded in the fundamentals of good musicianship and are given the tools to solve problems and make musical decisions on their own. When they are equipped with these tools, they can mindfully approach the music. Not only does this make rehearsals more productive, but more enjoyable for students and teachers alike. It is also important, I feel, that as directors, we don't lose sight of the fact that our job is to educate kids musically and otherwise. It is so easy to get caught up in contests and competitions, but when we focus on teaching students how to be responsible contributors to their communities, how to work for a something greater than themselves, and how to experience life through art, we impact them now and forever. I find that when you are genuine in this aspect, it is easy to get everyone on board with your vision. Finally, the most important key to becoming successful in this field is making connections with others who know more about the business than you do. I owe much of my success to my mentors and colleagues who have shared their experience with me. It has been because of their willingness to give unselfishly that I am the teacher I am today.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am constantly amazed and inspired by the dedication and perseverance of the students in our program. This year, for example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav, we missed nearly three weeks of rehearsal, and were forced to cancel our plans for our marching band's first competition at the national level. With no other choice, we began a totally new contest show on September 15th. The resiliency of those young musicians, some of whom had lost their homes, to come together to work for a common goal was truly remarkable. I often tell our band parents that no matter how high we raise the bar, somehow our students always manage to jump over it. I am proud to be a part of a community that values hard work and commitment to excellence.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: There have been so many high points in my career, that it is difficult to name just one. The best of times for me have always been when, in rehearsal or performance, everything came together in just the right way, and we were able to experience music making at its finest. Often at our final concert of the year, a student will give a speech about their years in our bands. I am humbled when I hear them tell how their time here has changed their lives for the better. That's what keeps me going.



MAINE

Kyle Smith

Director of Instrumental Music

Westbrook High School

Westbrook

Years at School: 3

Total Years Teaching: 6

Students in Program: 150

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I have no doubt that the biggest key to success is the management of people, most importantly students. Dealing with everything that we have to deal with in teenagers, if you can work with them, motivate them, and inspire them, you can do great things. If they do not believe in you as a teacher, it doesn't matter how good your score study skills are, or how advanced your conducting chops are. If the students are invested in the program and they care as much as you do, then you will be highly successful. I would recommend reading John Wooden's book, *Wooden*, to learn about how to work with people. Every music teacher should read it. For me, a close second place is your programming.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Students inspire me. I have so many students with more natural talent than I have ever had, and I can only imagine what they are capable of. My goal is to put the shine in their eyes by inspiring and motivating them to achieve and excel in the performance of quality music. The more shining eyes I have around me, the more successful I am.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I had three grade-five private trumpet students in a weekly group lesson. They started in September, brand new to the instrument. By May, two of them were doing very well, but one student could not play C and G. After eight months, this really hard worker couldn't play two notes. Everything he played, any valve combination, came out as low C. I had him try everything – buzzing, singing, whistling, everything. One day in May we were working on an exercise; the light bulb went off, and he raised his hand. "So Mr. Smith, you are saying that as the notes get higher in the staff they sound higher?" He promptly played the C scale without difficulty. I hadn't said, "As the notes go higher in the staff, they sound higher." I will remember him forever, because he taught me to never skip anything while teaching basics. I will never forget him as long as I live.



MARYLAND

Lauren Heller

Band Director

Patuxent High School

Lusby

Years at School: 3

Total Years Teaching: 3

Students in Program: 75

KEYS TO SUCCESS: As simple as it seems, I have found the key to be remembering what I love about music. I remind myself that I am a music teacher, not a band director or a hall monitor, but a teacher of music. I am helping shape tomorrow's music consumers, and I want those consumers to be more than consumers. I want them to be music lovers. By no surprise, my students respond best when I am my most vulnerable, when I really show them how I feel about music. The key is not being afraid to show them.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am most inspired by my students' curiosity. It revitalizes me and reminds me why I became interested in music. They always want to learn more. They always want to tackle a new, more challenging piece. They always want to hear about my experiences making music. I encourage them to continue making music their whole lives, whether or not they decide to major in music in college. The curiosity and wonder they have about music gives me hope that they will indeed keep music a part of their lives forever.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Almost every day has something memorable within it, but the best are those "a-ha" moments. When a student works so hard and finally achieves his goal, it is the most satisfying experience to be a part of. The most memorable moment I have had was in a rehearsal. The moment was beautiful, and nobody said a word when the piece ended. It was a moment of true connection. It took all of us out of our chaotic public school world for a moment and transported us to somewhere beautiful. It was moving for everyone in the room.



MASSACHUSETTS

Ronald Parsons

Band Director
Danvers High School
Danvers

Years at School: 22

Total Years Teaching: 24

Students in Program: 150

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Successful music educators are bridge builders. As a band director, I have learned the importance of understanding the dynamics of the community and plugging into it. Spend time building and developing good working relationships with administrators, colleagues, and members of the school committee. Engage and encourage music booster groups to be involved in the support and advocacy of the program. Excite and empower students to take ownership of their band. Instill in students a strong sense of responsibility for themselves and accountability to each other. Encourage students to always reach beyond themselves. Each day challenge them to strive to be their best. With purpose, passion, and perseverance pursue excellence. Reach beyond the concert hall and the festival. The largest and most diverse community audience we will perform for is during the Memorial Day Parade and our high school graduation, two major community-wide events.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired by the way producing music brings students together, the many life skills they learn, and the experiences they have. Each year our band is made up of those who are academically gifted and those who are not, those who are athletic and those who are not, and those who are musically gifted and those who are not. We have students with physical challenges and those with other challenges. When it comes time to perform, you cannot tell the senior from the freshman, number one in the class from number 200. The teamwork they learn, the leadership they foster, and the skills they develop level the playing field. No one sits on the bench. They are an ensemble.

"Successful music educators are bridge builders." – Ronald Parsons, Danvers, Mass.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My most memorable moment as a teacher was at a high school graduation. I had a student in the band who had been confined to a wheel chair since age six with muscular dystrophy. At the time, I was teaching the elementary instrumental program, and he began to learn the trumpet. Circumstances were such that I ended up being his band director all the way through middle school and high school. He performed the field show with us in a motorized wheel chair, played in concert and jazz band, and travelled with us on band trips performing in Disney World and Washington D.C. I never once ever heard him say "I can't." He would always say, "Let me try." When he graduated, with tears in his eyes, he came to me and said, "Thanks for believing in me. You gave me hope."



MICHIGAN

Mark D'Angelo

Director of Instrumental Music
Roosevelt High School
Wyandotte

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 11

Students in Program: 150

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe the answer to this question differs from situation to situation. What has worked well for my program can't always be prescribed to another band or orchestra director in a different socio-economic circumstance or environment. However, the consistent approach for all music educators is, in my opinion, to set a standard of excellence, encourage your students often, and have a desire to make a difference in the lives of the students.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired by success stories, hearing about how students and programs have found success. I am inspired by determination and seeing students striving for excellence. I am inspired by passion, putting into practice the things that are most important. I am inspired every year by witnessing how participation in band and orchestra changes the lives of my students.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I was thrilled to be invited to the 2007 Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids to present a performance of the Roosevelt High School African Drum & Dance Ensemble.



MINNESOTA

Jennifer Stelzig

Band Director
Bertha-Hewitt High School
Bertha

Years at School: 1

Total Years Teaching: 19

Students in Music Program: 121

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe that helping the students develop a strong sense of responsibility and leadership is vital. When students are given ownership in their program, they are more likely to work hard to achieve group goals. I like to think that I provide the students with the necessary tools, information, encouragement, and guidance. They make the magic.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The students, plain and simple. Over the years, I have learned as many important lessons from them as they have, hopefully, learned from me. Their energy, enthusiasm, and honesty are truly amazing. When I see them achieving something musically, I find that I feel the same sense of accomplishment. When I see them struggling, it motivates me to work harder in an attempt to find a method that will help them.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: For the 10th-anniversary cabaret (a show that featured the jazz band, as well as a variety of other musical acts) we decided to hold an alumni night. It took over a year to organize, but we had former band members from all over the country drive and fly in to attend a morning rehearsal and perform in that evening's concert. It was amazing to see that their band experience had meant that much to them. The sold-out show ended up being a fabulous evening of memories, music, and camaraderie. It was unbelievable.

MISSISSIPPI

Steve Stringer

Director of Instrumental Music
Meridian High School
Meridian

Years at School: 3

Total Years Teaching: 11

Students in Program: 450

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe that one of the keys to success as a music director is a passion for music and the desire to share it with young people. However, passion alone is not enough. I also believe that as a music educator I must constantly be willing to learn from others, whether it is from colleagues, administrators, or students. Working with a great staff makes success possible for the entire program here at Meridian. Finally, the ability to communicate from different perspectives is also important to achieve success.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The thing that inspires me most as a music educator is when students have been struggling with a concept and are about to give up, but then something will start to click within the group and then all of a sudden they start to grasp the idea and produce results. Also, inspiration comes from the support of the students when they say thank you for something that we have worked on that has success, and sometimes it may not be music related, but a problem of a personal nature.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: The most memorable moment for me as a teacher was in 2002. The band where I was teaching at the time was on the way to the state marching festival and we were involved in a bus accident. There were a couple of minor injuries and the students were very frightened. We gathered the students together beside the buses, on the side of the road, and told them we were going to cancel our appearance at the festival, but even though they were freaked out, they would have none of it. They insisted on continuing on and performing. When we finally got to the site we realized word of our unfortunate circumstances had spread. As we entered the stadium the crowd gave us a huge ovation. Finally, at the end of the day, ratings were announced, and we had earned all superior ratings, what a thrill. However, the thrill was not in the ratings, but in the courage of the students to complete a task they had began many months before.



MISSOURI

Ky Hascall

Director of Bands
Park Hill High School
Kansas City

Years at School: 7

Total Years Teaching: 16

Students in Program: 280

KEYS TO SUCCESS: For me, the keys to success as a music educator are three-fold. I believe that vision is critical; we need to know where we want to go so that we can plan for success. We also need introspection to look honestly at ourselves and our students to evaluate their progress and see if they are learning what we are trying to teach, to see if what we are trying to teach is the best plan for the success of the students. Finally, resource management is the key that is bigger than most realize. This broad area includes using resources such as people, (parent groups, administration, and school support staff), places, (facilities, location of school compared to private instructors, and colleges and high level performance venues) and things (instrument inventory, budgets, program history, and traditions) to make your program the best it can be.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I get inspiration from students who are hungry to learn and those who push me to help them go as far as they want to go. Also those students who struggle to learn but keep trying; I keep trying to find a different way to make a connection so they can continue to learn. I have also found a lot of inspiration from older band directors who have given years to a career in music and have made a difference in the lives of so many students, giving them the gift of music for the rest of their lives.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: What comes to mind for me is a loud, obnoxious sixth grader I had. He didn't play well, and his behavior was worse. He seemed to want to play but couldn't focus. I asked the counselor if there was a story, and there was. He had lost his father the year before and was the only child. As the anniversary of his father's death drew near he got worse. Finally, one day I asked if he would like some extra help after school, and he agreed. Needless to say, we talked more than played but things got better in class. Fast forward six years, he was still in band, still a bit loud, but a loyal band kid. He was excited to be graduating and (here's the memorable thing for me) that he would be marching in a division one university band the next fall. He wasn't a music major, but that doesn't matter; he was a whole person, someone who belonged and contributes to society. That is why I keep teaching music.

MONTANA

Karen Ulmer

Band Director
Columbia Falls High School
Columbia Falls

Years at School: 9

Total Years Teaching: 24

Students in Program: 157

KEYS TO SUCCESS: The key to success for any educator is establishing positive relationships with students. It is important for students to know that you see them as individuals and that they matter to you both inside and outside of the classroom. When they know you believe in them, they are much more receptive to what you have to say .

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired by the a-ha's, those musical moments when things come together just right, and the students' faces light up. I always enjoy their joy in the music.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Graduation Day, 2002. One of my trombone players came to find me after the ceremony to tell me that band had kept him in school and was the reason he stayed and graduated. He was the first person in his family to graduate from high school.



NEBRASKA

Terry Rush

Director of Instrumental Music
Lincoln High School
Lincoln

Years at School: 25

Total Years Teaching: 30

Students in Music Program: 300

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Never stop learning. There are so many directors out there that are willing to share their successes with you. If you're new at this, ask a vet. There's no point in your career where you know everything. If you think you do, you will fail – thus, your kids fail.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Watching kids grow, whether it be their first step in marching band, or starting one of the classic band, or orchestral pieces. Taking them from the bare roots of a selection to its performance, whether it be at a contest or concert. I too have to admit, having Dr. Tim as a friend and mentor has jump started my battery all too many times. He's always willing to listen and be there.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: As a music educator and parent, having my two sons and daughter choose to go to my school to be a part of my program, even though they were in another school's district, certainly makes me proud. I can also include our three trips to London, England and the experiences and sites my students have seen, many of which will be a once-in-a-life time experience and without a doubt the pride my students have in their accomplishments on the marching field and on the stage.

NEVADA

Mark McArthur

Director of Bands
Basic High School
Henderson

Years at School: 6

Total Years Teaching: 8

Students in Program: 100

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Always be prepared. Being a band educator means running a program with many moving parts, and you never know when those moving parts break down. Actually, Murphy's Law seems to take effect more often than not. Anticipating the unexpected, in both the rehearsal setting and behind the scenes work, has helped to reduce my stress level a considerable amount.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The other band, choir, and orchestra directors in the Clark County School District have been great friends and colleagues. We work well together to produce so many events for our students, and they have always been there to provide an extra hand when I needed them. I feel honored to work with such an amazing group of music educators.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Every year, the Basic High School Wind Ensemble performs their annual pops concert at the end of May, during the final week of school. Two years ago, I decided to challenge them with a new piece of music by David Maslanka "Give Us This Day", and the students responded with their most memorable performance to date. I could not have asked for a more committed and sincere performance from my students. Even though it's not a piece you would generally find at a pops concert, the audience responded by claiming David Maslanka's piece was the highlight of the evening. This type of music is usually a tough sell in my neck of the desert.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Bob Couturier

Band Director
New Searles Elementary School
Nashua

Years at School: 10

Total Years Teaching: 13

Students in Program: 50

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Keeping the students best interest in mind at all times. Having a willingness to sacrifice your personal time for your program. Having a likable personality and positive approach to teaching that kids respond to. Being creative with your teaching and be willing to try out new or different approaches. Finally, I believe that it is important to have a high level of musicianship for yourself and to keep improving in this area for the rest of your teaching career. The higher the level of musicianship that you have for yourself, the more you will be able to offer to your students.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: When students give you 100 percent of their best effort and show progress at what they are doing.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I am fortunate to have a few, but the biggest one that comes to mind is when I wrote a blues piece for my school band called the "New Searles Blues," and we played it for the day concert for a school assembly. When the piece was finished the kids in the audience went nuts. That was the loudest and most sincere appreciation of a performance that I have ever been a part of as a teacher or a professional musician. My students felt like rock stars after that and were very inspired.

**NEW JERSEY****Ed Webber**

Band Director
Immaculata High School
Somerville

Years at School: 7

Total Years Teaching: 7

Students in Program: 356

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I think that it is important to remember to start every day as new. Every kid comes with a story, and if you treat them with respect they usually return that. I also think it is important to have a routine. Kids thrive with structure. When they know what to expect, it is much easier to hold them accountable when they don't follow through with your expectations. Finally, I believe that it is important to have your program built around developing the whole person. If it is just about the music and never about the kids, then all that hard work ends with the school year.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am constantly inspired by the students. They make me laugh. They bring a new twist to every single class. That is part of the fun in teaching high school.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I have had many moments that have made all of this work worth it. However, if I had to single one out, it would have to be a student that stopped by after graduation. I write to the senior band members after graduation, wishing them luck. Usually I get a few e-mails after that saying thank you and occasionally even a handwritten card. But one student made it a point to stop by one of our marching band rehearsals in the summer to say thank you. He was someone that struggled through the program. I thought on more than one occasion about throwing him out. I'm not sure why I didn't. I guess because he hadn't done anything all that bad besides driving me crazy. But he came and thanked me for making him work hard and teaching him that the only way to success is through work. And he talked to me about how band was the one thing in his life that remained constant. It was something that was always there. He was always welcomed in the band room, even after he had been a pain in rehearsal. He talked about how that stability was so important because it wasn't coming from home.

**NEW MEXICO****Bill Allred**

Director of Bands
Clovis High School
Clovis

Years at School: 13

Total Years Teaching: 13
Students in Program: 180

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I consider the keys to success to be, willing to work hard, learn from your mistakes, ask questions, and learn from the best. I also believe you have to have a burning desire to help the kids be successful.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: What inspires me is watching the kids grow musically, emotionally, and academically, day one to the last day of the year. I enjoy seeing the look of gratification in their eyes when they have a great performance.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My most memorable moment as a teacher came last year. A little background: we have academic ineligibility in New Mexico. Students are not allowed to perform in any activity if their G.P.A. is below a 2.0 or if they have more than one F. Our biggest marching contest fell two days after report cards were distributed. The band directors took a hands-on approach with the students' academic progress, during the course of the nine weeks, by counseling each one. In the past, we averaged 10 –20 students that were ineligible. Last year, we had only two students, out of 180, who were academically ineligible. The band achieved Grand Champion and the highest score ever given to a New Mexico band.

NEW YORK

James Dumas

Band Director
 Liverpool High School
 Liverpool

Years at School: 6

Total Years Teaching: 13

Students in Program: 180

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe any music educator must truly enjoy sharing their love of music with their students. For me, being a successful music educator is more than just a job; it's a lifestyle that demands commitment, discipline, and a tremendous amount of patience with and understanding of today's youth.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The look in a student's eyes when they realize they have achieved a level of personal excellence that they had not experienced before. I am also constantly inspired by my own mentors and colleagues who do great things with students each and every day. I have been extremely fortunate to have had tremendous teachers as part of my own musical education.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: There have been many moments that have stood out in my mind as special, but perhaps the most memorable to date was having my students perform "You'll Never Walk Alone" at a fellow band member's funeral. I was completely blown away by just how focused they were during the performance despite their own grief over the loss of a great friend. It was truly amazing.



NORTH CAROLINA

Patricia Quigley

Director of Bands
 Cedar Ridge High School
 Hillsborough

Years at School: 7

Total Years Teaching: 15

Students in Program: 140

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I feel that developing strong organization and communication skills are essential to success as a music educator. Without these assets, one's ability to teach music is lost in the whirlwind of the public education environment.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am inspired by great music and the opportunity afforded me to expose young musicians to that music. The performance of wonderful music is my roadmap for classroom instruction and the motivational tool I need for my students.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Every time one of my students makes an honor band or wins a music award outside of our school, I get very excited. The experience of the first ever student that I taught who made the N.C. All-state Band always stays fresh in my mind. He didn't study privately; the only help he received in preparing for the audition was from me. He made first chair tuba in the middle school band and was so proud, as was I. This young man still keeps in touch with me today. He's now 26; he didn't go into music, but he counts that experience as one of his personal favorites, which is really rewarding for me.



NORTH DAKOTA

Jon Baumann

Director of Bands
Bismarck High School
Bismarck

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 13

Students in Program: 140

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe the most important key to success is a love for teaching music. If you don't love what you do, you can never expect the students you work with to appreciate the art form we love. I also believe you must be organized, punctual, and have the ability to listen, and not just in the musical sense. Students will always work harder for someone who they know cares about them.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Nothing inspires me more than seeing someone doing a great job; it doesn't matter if it is music, math, or social studies. It really motivates me to work even harder for my students.

"There is nothing more rewarding than having students achieve beyond what they thought was possible."

– Jon Baumann, Bismarck, N.D.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: The most memorable moments for me continue to be when a student who is working very hard to master a concept, finally gets it. There is nothing more rewarding than having students achieve beyond what they thought was possible.

OHIO

Ryan Smith

Associate Director of Bands
Lakota West High School
West Chester

Years at School: 1

Total Years Teaching: 7

Students in Program: 400

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I think putting your students in a position to be successful is one of the best attributes of a good music teacher. We teach and review basic fundamental playing skills each and every day, before we even get to the music. No amount of great literature can replace good tone, rhythmic, and technical ability. Finally, being successful also hinges on the willingness to adapt and learn new things each day, week, and year.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Great performances by our groups, either in rehearsal or on stage in front of an audience, is why we do what we do.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: The most memorable event of my career is having my very first band, on the way to my very first football game, seek refuge on the floor of a bar, in uniform, as a tornado touched down less than one mile from our bus. What a way to start a career.



OKLAHOMA

Kirby Swinney

Director of Bands
 Shawnee High School
 Shawnee
Years at High School: 11
Years Teaching: 24
Students in Program: 120

KEYS TO SUCCESS: The master key to success is the pure enjoyment one gets by working with kids. There seems to be too many directors who believe that the highest level of musical performance takes precedence over everything else. While it is important to challenge my students and push them to achieve at a high level, my job first and foremost is to make sure that the time I spend with my students will result in positive experiences that will make them want to continue to be involved in music for their entire life.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: The moment when a struggling beginner finally gets the light to come on. When a student with no parental support finds a way to succeed. When a student takes the time to do some small thing for me without me asking him to. When a kid simply says thank you.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I really couldn't put my finger on one thing. There are so many, but I would say that the things I remember most fondly are little things that I remember about former students and my experiences with them in the past. All of the awards won at contests have been great, but nothing compares to the day to day experiences just interacting with the kids. It keeps me feeling young and alive.



OREGON

Dave Matthys

Band Director
 Lake Oswego High School
 Lake Oswego

Years at School: 6

Total Years Teaching: 30

Students in Program: 148

KEYS TO SUCCESS: The keys to my success as a music educator are communication and involvement with my peers, administration, and students. On a professional level, I attend conferences, workshops, and am active in Oregon Music Educators and the Oregon Band Directors Association. I do not hesitate to share ideas or ask questions of other band directors. I also communicate on a regular basis with both school and district administration regarding what is happening within my music program. But the biggest key to my program's success is that my students know I care about them as individuals, both in and outside the classroom. I make a point to show support of their other extracurricular activities by attending athletic events that they participate in, as well as other music events such as choir concerts, Portland Youth Philharmonic, and recitals.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Seeing my students with a sense of pride of being in the band. When I come to school every morning and see that students enjoy coming to my classes, it makes me want to give them every bit of energy that I have.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Last year after all the band contests were over, I took the seniors on a trip to the beach. Watching them as they had such a great time together showed me how good of friends they had become. Their friendships, and all the memories that they have shared with each other since starting beginning band together, will last a lifetime. Knowing that I had a part in creating this is one of many things that I have found gratifying in teaching music.

PENNSYLVANIA

Michael Mackey

Band Director
 South Fayette High School
 McDonald

Years at School: 6

Total Years Teaching: 6

Students in Program: 337

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe the key to success as a music educator is rooted in one's personal growth and maturation

as a musician, from childhood through professional training and performance. It is critical that music educators consider their own experiences in music, the best and the worst, when developing teaching strategies.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: As a music educator, I am inspired by travels with my wife and the exciting opportunity to experience the people, food, and cultures of the world and the wonderful music behind them all.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My most memorable moments as a teacher come each time I see the joy and excitement on the faces of my students following a great performance, knowing that they will remember that experience for the rest of their lives.



RHODE ISLAND

Mark Colozzi

Co-Director of Bands
Cranston High School East
Cranston

Years at School: 23

Total Years Teaching: 29

Students in Program: 350

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Respect is number one. Students respond positively when this virtue is addressed on a regular basis. It must be demonstrated in all aspects of the program, instructor to instructor, instructor to student, and student to student. This is not an easy task, especially in this day and age. Additionally, time commitment is integral, as students will return the dedication that the instructor displays. Lastly, a positive attitude, even under the most adverse of conditions, our economy is certainly testing in us in this realm.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I feed off of the energy and enthusiasm of the great kids who I have the honor to teach. They certainly keep us older folk hip. It is especially inspiring when students show resilience in striving for excellence under any and all circumstances. I like that fact that they will not settle for less than what they are capable of. This truly amazes me.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: It is actually a moment that occurs from time to time, when a student who struggles with learning issues achieves a high musical standard through total perseverance and love for the art form. There is nothing more gratifying as a music educator than to witness such growth and determination. How fortunate are we who are given the opportunity to teach something that truly opens the door for success for all students.



SOUTH CAROLINA

Dr. Jerry Gatch

Director of Bands
Lexington High School
Lexington

Years at School: 15

Total Years Teaching: 23

Students in Program: 180

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I have found that building strong relationships with my students enables me to motivate them to strive for higher levels of musical excellence. That strong relationship also gives students a boosted self-esteem, engendering the courage that it takes to study privately, try out for region/all-state bands, and play a solo at Solo & Ensemble Festival. Additionally, I think students will follow suit if they can tell that their teacher loves making music.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Like the golfer that has one or two great shots per round that keep him coming back, I think I have had enough great instances as a band director to keep me passionate about teaching music. Seeing the proud look in students' eyes as they master a technical passage once thought to be impossible, noting chill bumps on them as they beautifully shape a lyrical phrase, and having the eyes of everyone in an ensemble fill with tears out of sheer emotion from a musical performance are some pretty great shots. Fore!

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Luckily, memorable moments have been abundant in my teaching career. Certainly among the list would be having the wind ensemble featured at conferences like NBA/CBDNA, MENC, SCMEA, and festivals like the BOA National Concert Band Festival, The Disney Honors, and NAI, and having the marching band

distinguish itself at our state championships, BOA Regionals, and the Tournament of Roses Parade. I think most poignant is the moment which, thankfully, is a recurring moment: when I get a phone call from a new band director who is a former student of mine. There is a bond and a level of appreciation from both ends of the line that is rewarding beyond expression. The former student gets some advice, which may or may not work, and I get the affirmation that I have passed along my passion for making music and helped others to do the same.



SOUTH DAKOTA

Shane Macklin

Band Director
Roosevelt High School
Sioux Falls

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 18

Students in Program: 170

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Caring about the success of students. Pushing students to succeed, not allowing excuses, and showing students that they all have the potential to succeed no matter what the circumstances.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Students developing as young adults in our program and achieving great things. Great musicians, great performances, and great music.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: My most memorable moment was at a marching show when we had performed very well in prelims. Finals were cancelled at the last minute because a light rain had started. The students were very disappointed, so much so that we performed the show in the parking lot, and as I looked around I saw tears running down their faces. They were performing for the true love of the show, the music, and what it meant to them. It was at that moment that I realized how important my job was and how much music can affect the lives of students and their parents.



TENNESSEE

Jim Smith

Director of Bands
Houston High School
Germantown

Years at School: 18

Total Years Teaching: 27

Students in Music Program: 285

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Successful band directors need to not only like kids, they need to be actively interested in their lives away from band. What we do for our students is no more or less important to most of them than are their academic, athletic, or community responsibilities. In band, we either blow spit into it, hit it, or wave it on the end of a stick. Keeping this in perspective is important.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Students react differently to band. They join for a variety of reasons both musical and social. In every group, there are a few special kids with a strong passion for what we are trying to accomplish. I find much motivation in trying to meet their expectations and make the day special for them.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: After 27 years as a band director, the marching trophy moments and strong festival performances tend to run together. My very first beginner band consisted of 16 kids at a small private school. We performed "Sneaky Pete" during a concert late in the fall. I did not know then that I would still be doing this all these years later. I wasn't even sure we would get through the tune. I'm not certain I can hum festival tunes from two years ago, but I remember every note of "Sneaky Pete."



Texas

Gary L. Faust

Band Director
W. Charles Akins High School

Austin

Years at School: 5

Total Years Teaching: 27

Students in Program: 160

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe that this career is not for me, meaning I am not a trophy chaser. I am in this career for the kids. I am not concerned about my image or ego. I simply believe that this career of music education is a vehicle to help kids get to a better place in life. It is a vehicle to help kids develop the characteristics necessary for a productive and successful adult life. It is the reason many of my kids come to school, and it is what they dream of every night. The kids will not remember the plastic trophies, but will cherish the journey to achieve them and the musical and artistic experience associated with the performance that earns these awards.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I was fortunate enough, in high school, to have one of the best music educators in our career decide to invest in my life: Ms. Paula Crider, formerly of the University of Texas and of Austin's Crockett High School. I can't imagine what my adult life would be like if I had not been of a part of her band and had she not chosen to make something of me. Because of this fortunate interaction and influence by her, I chose to give back to my world by doing the same thing for the kids who I would be fortunate to teach. The other piece of inspiration is that most people in our career believe that the only programs that have potential are those from affluent and Anglo communities. Successful music education programs are expensive, but there are ways around that issue. However, I believe and practice the idea that God did not discriminate when he disseminated talent and intellect. I was told that the kids at Akins High School could not be successful on the highest level, and now I enjoy proving to the world they are completely wrong in thinking such a thing.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: When I got a call and learned that one of my greatest students, a very poor, underprivileged African-American student, was now the principal trumpet for the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Also, when my marching band made it to the top-10 finals at the Texas UIL State Marching Contest. I was told by numerous colleagues it could never happen.

UTAH

Michael Huestis

Percussion Specialist

American Fork High School

American Fork

Years at School: 8

Total Years Teaching: 11

Students in Program: 400

KEYS TO SUCCESS: An inspired love of discipline and self-motivation are the most important keys to fostering student achievement. Students who are shown what great things can be achieved through their enthusiasm for their work will be successful in music education and in life. Words like "work," "quality," and "professional" need to be used in the same breath as "fun," "joy," and "success." When young people take these ideas to heart, great things happen. I believe it is my most important duty to teach students the satisfaction of enthusiastic work.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I am constantly inspired by today's music students who overcome the trappings of our modern society. We live in a time of instant gratification, but music simply doesn't allow for this to happen. Music is a long-term commitment and there is simply no shortcut to achievement in our business. There is nothing more exciting for a music teacher than seeing a student finally succeed after having struggled with an instrument, a particular solo, or a difficult passage in their repertoire. The success of a student after a long term relationship with their instrument is most inspiring.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: One of the best moments for me was American Fork's series of performances at the Bands of America National Festival. The students knew that it would be a great honor to perform with the most accomplished schools in the country, and their efforts in preparation of the program for the festival were superior. The performances, the world class clinicians, and the esprit de corps that was presented by all of the participants, made it one of the best festivals that I have had the privilege to be a part of. The highlight of the festival was the inspirational clinic presented by Anthony Maiello to our students. His passion for music and efforts for young musicians had both the performers and their parents in tears. The entire event provided one of the highlights of my career as an educator.



VERMONT

Rich Davidian

Band Director
 Montpelier High School
 Montpelier
Years at School: 36
Total Years Teaching: 38
Students in Program: 235

KEYS TO SUCCESS: They are the same as the keys to success as a person – respect, perspective, balance, common sense, commitment, consistency, humor, inspiration, focus, and great music. Did I mention humor?

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Other fine educators, inspirational performances, music students who have made great progress through their own hard work, teaching material with which I feel confident, students who say thank you as they leave class, my two sons who are professional musicians.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: There are many; I've been teaching 38 years. Conducting an honors group. Jamming with a special needs student. Music education reflections over lunch with Lester Bowie. Learning about jazz masters from musicians who knew them or played with them. Students exceeding their own expectations.



VIRGINIA

Tom Hopson

Director of Bands
 Virginia High School
 Bristol

Years at School: 9

Total Years Teaching: 10

Students in Program: 120

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I believe there are many keys to success. As music educators, we must be able to communicate our needs effectively to whomever we address. Students, parents, and administrators have to understand the needs of our programs. Marketing ensembles through local public performances allows people to be familiar with our programs by providing an avenue for fostering support through awareness. I also feel that constantly evaluating my teaching, forces me to find new ways to be successful. I frequently request the opinions of my peers regarding the best way to handle classroom instruction and any situations that arise. Most times, they have encountered similar issues and can share insight about how to resolve almost any situation. I believe this is necessary, because our programs are in constant change from year to year with new students and new situations. Preparation allows us to be successful in all that we challenge ourselves and our students to accomplish.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I look in many places for inspiration. Sometimes it can come from observing successful programs, and sometimes it comes from personal accomplishments. My inspiration comes from the satisfaction I get from seeing my students succeed. Their success inspires me to find new ways to help them be successful in and outside of their music courses. When students come back years later and say how much they enjoyed their experiences in my program and how those experiences helped them to be better at what they do in their lives, I am filled with inspiration to do the same for my current students. I also gain inspiration from fellow directors, specifically my high school director. He had a great influence on my development as a professional by having me strive for the best execution of whatever task we undertook. By setting achievable goals, he taught me that we always strive for more, to go further, when we are able to see ourselves successful. Understanding that I have other people to rely on for advice enables me to focus on bettering my program. Rehearsal is also a great source of inspiration. We all feel success from working through passages of music that had once seemed beyond our reach. This feeling of success is very inspirational. It helps me get through those days when nothing seems to go my way.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: Everything that happens is memorable in my teaching life. So many things come to mind, but I guess I have to say that my most memorable part of school is the beginning of each year. Transition is such an exciting time, new faces coming into the program, new musical voices becoming part of the creative process of designing and making music. It is always very exciting to see all the potential in the new students walking through the door of my classroom.

WASHINGTON

Eric Parker

Director of Bands
 Central Valley High School
 Veradale
Years at School: 6
Total Years Teaching: 7
Students in Program: 140

KEYS TO SUCCESS: A passion to instill a thirst for lifelong music making skills and an honest approach in praise and critique of your own groups. I also think it's important to delegate. I'm not always great at sharing responsibilities, but putting faith in student and parent leadership creates an ownership in all that we do. Building strong music programs is a community effort, and that community starts with your own students and their parents. Teachers manage the steps and the goals from year to year, but the students and parents can create the blocks to build upon.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: My inspiration comes from the students' faith in our music program and their willingness to work so hard to achieve our team goals. I love how music and band can give kids a place to belong.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: The final concert of my second year, I had senior students conduct the entire wind ensemble set. The kids sounded great; the student conductors were so serious and focused, and I was given the privilege to just be an audience member. The ownership everyone had in that concert was great to see.



WEST VIRGINIA
Sam Leffingwell, Jr.
 Band Director
 Hurricane High School
 Hurricane
Years at School: 6
Total Years Teaching: 12
Students in Program: 57

KEYS TO SUCCESS: To be an effective teacher, one must find a balance between the professional, marital, and family parts of their lives. Learn to not micromanage by trusting others with delegated duties. Finally, don't be afraid to ask veteran band directors for advice and guidance.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: I enjoying observing the developmental process of students making life, beauty, and art out of something as lifeless as sheet of paper containing scratches and scrawls of ink. Witnessing the "Oh, I finally get it" look from a student who has been struggling with an idea or concept makes me eager to come to work.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: During my third year at my first teaching position, I took great pride in watching my students receive a superior rating at the state festival for the first time in nearly twenty years.



WISCONSIN
Craig Mason
 Music Department Chairperson
 Stoughton High School Band
 Stoughton
Years at School: 15
Total Years Teaching: 21
Students in Program: 350

KEYS TO SUCCESS: Regardless of your career choice, you need to have passion for, and believe in, what you are doing, particularly if you work with people. Organization as a band director is crucial, as well as communication, creativity, flexibility, and the ability to see the big picture outside of your classroom.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Almost every person I have had contact with inspires me in some way. This could be a musical person, or not. For instance, one of my high school social studies teachers was very passionate regarding the mistreatment of Native Americans when Europeans began settling in America. Even as an adult, 20 years later, he inspired me to do research and perform a piece of music dedicated to the battle at Wounded Knee. He and I composed a

narration to go with the piece, between movements, and he actually read this at the performance. It was one of the most moving experiences for my students, me, and the audience, that I have ever been a part of. Not only was the performance very emotional, but the process of learning the music, having guest artists, specialists in Native American music, and lecturers working with the students over a period of time made the experience even more special. Many students were inspired to write poetry, papers, and do projects in their other courses related to this topic. None of this would have been possible without the inspiration that Tom Lawrence gave me when I was a 16-year-old high school student.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: There are so many that it is difficult to center in on one. Perhaps seeing my high school brass quintet work with and perform with the world famous Canadian Brass. The quintet was selected as the only group to do this. It was wonderful watching them sit mixed and perform pieces together, as well as share information and have some very special conversations 16 years later.

**WYOMING****Richard Garcia**

Director of Bands

Evanston High School

Evanston

Years at School: 4**Total Years Teaching:** 26**Students in Program:** 140

KEYS TO SUCCESS: I have this list hung up in my office. It serves as a great reminder of success. You can't do everything, but you can do something. To lead a band, one must sometimes turn his back on the crowd. Ships don't come in; they are brought in. There are no limits to the amount of good you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit. Oversleeping will never make dreams come true. There aren't any roles for success that work unless you do. One reason that big apples are always on the top of the basket is that there are always a lot of little ones holding them up there. Keep your mind open; something good might enter. Failure is the line of least persistence. One of the best things a man can have up his sleeve is his funny bone. If you blame others for your failures, do you credit them with your successes?

WHAT INSPIRES YOU: Turning skeptics into believers.

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT: I took a band in the middle of summer made up of students from six different schools and six different communities to perform in Washington D.C., New York, and Boston. We took three busses of students, six directors, and six bus drivers on a two week trip that involved a three-day, two-night, non-stop travel schedule to the eastern United States. Wow! What a trip! By the third day, the buses smelled awful; everyone was grouchy, muscles were sore. We all needed showers in a terrible way. I don't think the awful smell ever was completely removed out of those busses, and we had the return trip to look forward to! Lots of fantastic life long friendships emerged from that trip. Students still call me up to reminisce about that incredible journey