

Building the Bridge Between Middle School and High School

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- **Middle School Directors- Be the High School Band's Best Salesman!**
You don't want all of your hard work with your students the past 3 years to be for nothing. Encourage all of your students to continue in the high school band. Endorse the high school band program...OFTEN! If the students know you think it is great, they will tend to want to be a part of it. Most of the time, it's a comfort level thing. It is a big change they are about to embark upon and the bridge from middle school to high school starts with you!
- **Talk up the High School Band All 3 Years!**
Don't wait until the students are in the 8th grade to start mentioning the high school band. Start talking about it in their first year of band.
- **Invite the Middle School Students to the High School Band Concerts, Festival/Large Group Performance Evaluation Performances and Marching Band Contests and Exhibitions**
The more the students are exposed to the high school band, the more they will want to be a part of it one day. Many will have friends and older brothers or sisters in the band!
- **Have an 8th Grade Night at a High School Football Game**
Have a night when your 8th grade band students go over to the high school for a Friday night football game. Have them learn the stand tunes and fight song that week in class. They can then perform in the stands the first half of the game and then play the fight song with the high school band at half time. The students will love it! They get a chance to meet and socialize with the high school marching band members, play alongside them and really see what marching band is all about. The high school students will love it as well! It is always a very positive night and most of the students are hooked after that!

- **Combined Concerts and Rehearsals**

Consider having one or two combined concerts during the year. This is a great opportunity for the bands and directors to collaborate and perform together. Each band performs a few selections separately and then close with a combined piece. The bands come in early before the concert to have a chance to rehearse. Have the high school director conduct the combined piece. You can do this with the concert bands as well as the jazz bands. It's such a great symbol of passing the baton and the students crossing the bridge to high school!

Invite the high school students and director(s) to come in during festival/large group performance evaluation preparation time. The high school students can sit in and play along with the middle school students. Have the high school band director clinic the band. It is always great to have someone new come in, hear your band and give them feedback. It is also a great opportunity for the high school director to be in front of the students; the students have the opportunity to get to know that person and become more comfortable with him or her.

- **Be Involved with the High School Band on the Marching Band Staff or Do Sectionals for the Concert Bands During the Year**

It is so rewarding to be a part of your students' musical growth past middle school. Your involvement with the high school band also shows the students and parents that you will still be there even after they leave middle school. The high school directors would also appreciate the assistance!

- **Invite the High School Directors Over Often**

The high school director's presence at the middle school is so critical to their recruitment. Middle School directors invite your high school directors over often whether it is to teach a sectional for you, conduct the band or to just talk to your students about high school band. The more comfortable the students are with the high school director(s), the more students they will recruit.

- **High School Directors – Have a Winter Parent and Student Meeting.**

Schedule a meeting in the winter to discuss signing up for band classes, marching band, etc... Make yourself available to answer questions. It seems as if the registration process for high school classes starts earlier and earlier every year. As a high school director, you want to stay ahead of that so that other adults (counselors, teachers, and coaches) don't get in the 8th grade band students' and parents' ears first and tell them untruths about signing up for band, fitting it into their schedule, etc. Be proactive!

- **High School Directors - Make a Video about Your Program**
Make a video for the middle school students to watch in the winter and/or spring about your program. Include highlights of the past few years – marching band, concert band, colorguard, winterguard, ensembles (jazz band, percussion ensemble). Make it relevant and exciting so they will watch it and want to join! This is a commercial for your program. Let your tech savvy high school students be involved in the making of the video.

Of course we would all like to see as many students continue on into the high school band program as possible, but it is a team effort! If the directors communicate and work to be on the same page with the goals and plan for the recruitment process, there will be success. Music is a lifelong passion that we are responsible for instilling in our students!

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress;
working together is success.”
Henry Ford