

THE MUSIC EDUCATOR AS A LEADER



INTRODUCTION

The music educator must provide leadership in both the school and the community. Students and the public alike respect and appreciate an educator who is active in community affairs and who can provide leadership outside an academic setting. The five personal qualities of such a leader are enthusiasm, a high energy level, trustworthiness, friendliness, and a confident and able teaching style. There are four different styles of leadership: anarchic, democratic, autocratic, and manipulative. Although each has its proponents, this chapter will show that the democratic leader who involves students in the decision-making process will probably be the most successful. Finally, no matter what the leadership style, all leaders must be proactive, taking the initiative to lead rather than waiting for events to dictate actions.

LEADERSHIP IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Because of the nature of working with performance groups, the music educator often finds himself or herself cast in the role of a leader in school-associated activities. This role should be readily accepted if not actually sought because many of the administrative functions discussed in chapter 1 rely on the acceptance of the music educator as a leader.

A successful music educator possesses a certain sense of vision and can comfortably set and complete objectives. He or she also serves, by example and through practice, as a model of someone who not only can articulate clear and concise goals and objectives, but aid those under his or her direction in doing the same. Being a creative thinker and an initiator of action also helps the music educator in being accepted as a leader by peers.

Community leadership involves participation. To increase visibility, a music educator might become involved in a variety of nonteaching organizations such as service clubs, fraternal organizations, social groups, bowling or golf leagues, or church choirs and related activities. By serving as an officer or board member of at least one organization, the music educator can assume a leadership role. A teacher who associates only with other teachers is in danger of leading a very dull and unenlightened existence. This is not to say that a music educator's colleagues are not interesting, vital, and vibrant individuals, but to really feel the pulse of a community, a teacher needs to make every attempt to broaden his or her spectrum of personal relationships outside the school environment.

Through these community leadership activities, the music educator can generate enthusiasm for music, not only on the part of students but also on the part of adults. If people know the teacher as an individual, they are more likely to support him or her in any future program needs.

PERSONAL QUALITIES OF A LEADER

As music educators, we often fail to realize how many people we have to work with in our daily lives. That realization can be the first step toward becoming a recognized leader. There are strengths and weaknesses to be found in any leader. Although individual music educators may differ in their approach to leadership, several qualities serve as a common thread among those who are successful.

Enthusiasm. The most easily identifiable attribute contributing to the success of a music educator as a leader is the level of enthusiasm brought to the position. The enthusiasm generated must be genuine and have as its foundation educational objectives and sound philosophical judgment, as well as confidence based on educational training. Enthusiasm is the result of an energetic person working on something he or she finds keenly interesting.

Energy. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to lead and administer a music education program. The individual with an energy level sufficient enough to allow him or her to initiate and meet objectives will be accepted as a leader. As with enthusiasm and other personal qualities, the energy level must be contagious; it must rub off on those students and others who work with the music educator.

Integrity and trust. Students and colleagues alike must be able to trust the music educator, knowing that decisions made and policies established will be fairly and consistently administered. They must have confidence in the fact that promises made will be kept. The best reputation a leader in music education can possess relates to

displaying ethical conduct. Students in particular have a low tolerance level for broken promises. Music students have to see their teacher as a caring individual, one who consistently follows through on promises and commitments made.

Friendliness. While not necessarily becoming a close friend of the students, a music educator who leads well will develop a friendly approach toward students. This friendliness must be genuine. Again, students are quick to discern any degree of friendliness that is not authentic and sincere.

Teaching ability. All other personal qualities of a leader are worthless unless accompanied by high-level teaching skills. The music educator who is a successful leader is also an outstanding teacher.

You can be a good teacher and lack leadership qualities, but it is impossible to be accepted as a leader without also being a good teacher. If you can develop the level of teaching ability to the point where successful instruction results in fewer orders being issued and greater cooperation taking place, the ultimate balance between leadership and teaching has been achieved.

The five personal leadership qualities presented above usually exist in every individual administering a successful and respected music education program. These administrators may possess other qualities as well, to a varying degree, but enthusiasm for their work, a high energy level, an uncompromising feeling of trust, a professional level of friendliness, and superb teaching skills are the common denominators that create and maintain program excellence.

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Four types of leadership styles will be discussed. It is possible that a larger, more detailed list could be presented, but these four types are widely accepted as the styles most common to education. Readers should not be misled into thinking that they can memorize the traits associated with a particular leadership style and simply go out and be that type of leader. It is the intent of this book to guide readers toward understanding their leadership roles and to provide them with sufficient administrative concepts to support the development of their own eclectic leadership styles.

Undoubtedly, as each of the four leadership styles is presented, examples based on past experiences will readily come to mind. Definitions of the four styles of leadership are freely paraphrased from Knezevich (1975).

Anarchic. The anarchic style of leadership grants total freedom to an individual or group of individuals to make decisions without the leader. The leader does not offer direction or participate in the process in any manner. In this type of leadership, the

principal role of the leader is to provide pertinent materials, remaining apart from the process and participating only when called on. The leader lacks interest in the decision-making process and rarely offers comments on activities of the members. After a decision has been made and a course of events begins to unfold, the leader makes no attempt to interfere or become involved in any way. In actuality, anarchy is a "leaderless" social situation.

The anarchic style of leadership has no place in education administration, let alone in music education. In a situation of anarchy, the power belongs to the people, and the struggle to bring structure or order to a probable chaotic situation is all but impossible. Education without order is not acceptable in a democratic society.

Democratic. Although the leader participates in the formulation of policies in the democratic style of leadership, group action or decision-making is also involved. In this style, the group, along with the leader, determines what the tasks are and how to organize and accomplish them. Objective in praising or criticizing, the leader does not allow personal feelings to impede the group's process. Allowing those who will eventually be affected by the decision to be involved in making it is called *participatory administration*. This leadership style promotes excellent group productivity. Personalities shaped by democratic participation are more mature, more capable of objectivity, and less aggressive than those products of other leadership styles.

Music performing groups generally have a panel of elected officers as well as several board members who serve the director in a variety of ways. What they do varies, from assuming complete involvement in the decision-making process as it affects the total performing group to acting as a communication link between the director and the group. They may serve as an advisory board to the director or they may just be a token panel with few or no actual responsibilities.

The democratic style of leadership in music education certainly assists students in learning to make decisions. However, many music educators think they use the democratic style of leadership when they don't in fact surrender that amount of control.

Autocratic. The autocratic leader determines policy, makes all decisions, and assigns tasks to members without direction from or consultation with the group. This leader is personal in his or her praise or criticism of members of the group but remains aloof from the group. There are no group-inspired decisions. The leader declares what shall be done and when it shall be done, with no reason offered as to why it should be done. Group members have no choice but to accept these decisions.

Far too often this type of leadership is followed to the letter in school administration. It also has its proponents and followers in music education, particularly for performing groups that have a rigorous competitive schedule. The autocratic style of leadership in music education is not as prevalent today as it was when individuals in

charge of music ensembles came from a military background. This style was further perpetuated when educators were trained at the college level by third, fourth, and fifth generations of teachers immersed in the military tradition.

Manipulative. In the manipulative style of leadership, the leader makes his or her desires known, then appoints a committee to consider those desires. In reality, the committee is appointed only to approve the proposal, not to deliberate over it. The committee, without much thought or discussion, automatically endorses the proposal. This system works best when leaders reward those who support them and refrain from rewarding, or actually punish, those who do not support them.

This is one of the dominant styles of governing in a nondemocratic society. The manipulative style of leadership still thrives in some school systems. In music education, this style is infrequently found intact. Music educators sometimes appoint a committee to make a decision, knowing full well what the decision will be, but also knowing that group support for the decision will be stronger if the decision comes from a committee of group members. This practice cannot be considered a negative aspect of leadership, unless carried to excess. A good leader knows when to apply this form of manipulative leadership.

A variation of manipulative leadership occurs when the leaders appoints a committee and lists several options. The committee is restricted to those suggested options and is asked to debate the advantages and disadvantages of each, to select an option, and to report the results to the leaders. This semi-manipulative technique is frequently used by those who picture their leadership style as democratic.

Many teachers, music educators included, use the manipulative style of leadership more than they care to admit. Because students frequently make decisions they feel will please the teachers, teachers must be careful not to abuse this administrative privilege.

Music educators must understand that the development of a leadership style comes with teaching experience. In an actual teaching situation, mistakes—with resulting adjustments—can guide the music educator toward a personal style. The educator will gradually learn to be effective and produce educationally sound results. During this difficult yet extremely important developmental period in a teacher's life, there is little recourse but to model personal leadership style after an admired college or university director or instructor for organizational abilities, vision, and people skills, as well as musical expertise.

PROACTIVITY AND THE MUSIC EDUCATOR

All successful music educators have learned that they must become proactive in their approach to administering (leading) the music education program under their

direction. They realize, however subtly, that they must become responsible for their own professional lives as well as the musical lives of their students. Highly proactive teachers recognize that responsibility, and they do not blame circumstances, conditions, or anything else for their behavior. Their behavior is a result of a conscious choice, rather than a product of conditions, such as outside influences that positively or negatively affect the quality of the program under their supervision.

Proactivity involves anticipating, advance planning, and the realistic setting of goals and objectives as discussed in chapter 1. Who among us cannot recall finding ourselves in unfortunate situations in which we have to react to outside stimuli, rather than controlling events—a very uncomfortable, stressful, and exhausting experience. Such things as always trying to catch up, always being behind on meeting advertising and program copy deadlines, and so on are perhaps the most obvious indicators of a reactive “leader.”

Music educators need to act rather than be acted upon. Reactive leaders are made, not born, because it is generally felt that humans are, by nature, proactive beings. For that reason, among others, music educators simply cannot realistically blame outside forces such as scheduling problems, budget restrictions, lack of interest in the music program on the part of students, or anything else—except their own reactive approach to leadership—for a programming failure. There are many things in our professional lives that we cannot change, but with understanding of proactivity and dedicated effort, a reactive approach to teaching can be replaced by a proactive one.

LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Music educators who can see the big picture, who can envision long-term responsibilities with their classes or performing groups, and who understand how they personally fit into that picture are the true leaders in our profession. Music educators without a vision for the future and breadth of the music program in their school and their own individual role in that future sadly become managers. They struggle to maintain some type of order in their personal lives and settle for the status quo in their professional lives.

Leaders, in turn, are more interested in instituting change. They do this by challenging the process to some extent, taking some risks, and aiding their student musicians in understanding and sharing the leaders' long-range organizational vision for the music program, or the portion of that program under their direction.

Concepts created by visionary music educators strengthen and support all of the organizational and administrative functions found in chapter 1. This type of leader generally responds more quickly and more effectively in moments of crisis, and as any in-service music educator can relate, there are many, many moments of

crisis in all aspects of the music education profession. Finally, visionaries are not necessarily leaders. Anyone, however, who is placed in a leadership position in music education and does not possess vision will necessarily be an ineffective leader.

The chapters that follow will provide a foundation for individual styles; however, the key to success is flexibility. A leader can be likened to a catalytic agent, a unique ingredient that stimulates a desirable interaction between two or more factors. In music education a catalyst translates potential into reality. Set the example. Do what you say you will do. Disagreements very rarely occur among people who possess a common understanding of goals, objectives, and, perhaps more important, purposes.