

# Get 'Em & Keep 'Em: Improving Your Ensemble Recruitment and Retention

Dr. Marta Frey-Clark, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Dr. John Denis, Texas State University



## Keep in Mind...

- Principles vs. tools (*you* are the best judge of the right tools for your context!)
- Recruitment and retention overlap
- 3 sources:
  - Personal experience (good and bad)
  - Colleagues
  - Research

# Recruitment

# Be a presence in your feeder programs.

- Visit classes
- Attend/join concerts
- Communicate with feeder program teachers
- Do a recruitment tour
  - w/ demonstration group
  - w/ video
- Facilitate an instrument petting zoo in feeder programs

Start Early!

# Host students from your feeder programs

- Pizza and social night
- Women's "pajama party" night
- Men's singing/choreography night
- Collaborative concert

Start Early!

# Market your program

- What are you selling?
  - Real vs. fake benefits
  - Skills
  - Expression
- Who are you selling to?
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Administration
  - Community
- How are you selling?
  - Build a reputation
  - Great kids make great salespeople
  - Don't be shy—communicate, advertise, use media resources

# Market your program (cont'd.)

- Branding (aka the whole picture)
  - Encompasses the big picture items
  - Includes the little details
  - Built on reputation and presentation
    - Logo
    - Website
    - Communication



# Understand the school ecosystem

- **The Master Schedule**
  - Who is in charge of it?
  - What does it look like?
- **Stakeholders**
  - Program level (kids, parents)
  - Campus level (other teachers, coaches, admin)
  - District level
  - Community level



# Understand the school ecosystem (cont'd.)

- Accessibility
  - What does it cost to be in your ensemble?
    - Academically
    - Financially
    - Socially
  - How do you accommodate?
    - Identify obstacles
    - Remove as many obstacles as possible
  - Late-comers (aka – my friend joined band/choir/orchestra and is having fun)
    - Should you accept them?
    - If so, how do you make the transition work?

**Your experiences...**

# Retention

# Cultivate community

“I felt like I was a part of something”

- Responsive classroom
- Friday campfire
- Social events– movie night, mini golf, ice cream social, pool party, lock-in
- Trips– competitions, tours, educational field trips
- Teacher accessibility
- “I wish my teacher knew that...”

# Give students ownership

- Student leaders
- Student accompanists/choreographers
- Selection of t-shirt design, logo, etc.
- Selection of repertoire
- Incorporation of culturally relevant repertoire
- Decorating rehearsal space

# Aid students in navigating barriers

- Continuously examine barriers to being in your ensemble.
- What does it cost to be in your ensemble?
  - Financially
  - Socially
  - Academically
- What accommodations can you offer?
- What about move-ins?
  - Should you accept them?
  - If so, how can make the transition work?

# Celebrate Progress

- Celebrate victories privately and publically (mastering a new skill, giving a beautiful concert, performing at competition, completing a pedagogical series)
- Show your ensemble their progress
- Pass along compliments
- Tell them when you're proud of them

**Your experiences...**



# Learn from dropouts

- It isn't personal (even if it is)
  - Be professional and positive
  - Focus on the students you still have
- Learn why they quit
  - Factors beyond your control (minimize impact)
  - Factors in your control (understand, evaluate, change)

# Questions?

[mfreyclark@umhb.edu](mailto:mfreyclark@umhb.edu)

[john.denis@txstate.edu](mailto:john.denis@txstate.edu)