

Leadership Hand Book

2009-10 Cub Band

Character Consistency Depth

Leading a group of your peers can be a tremendously rewarding activity. It also can be a very challenging experience. As a leader in the Cub Band, you are going to be challenged and encourage to grow. This hand book is meant to serve as a guide for you to follow and hopefully it will help you. The ideas and skills included in this book are meant to help you as a student leader. However, these skills will also help you in other organizations and as you get older and take leadership rolls in college and your chosen profession.

Leadership in a vacuum:

The most important thing to remember is that leadership does not happen in a vacuum. If all of your constituents showed up perfect, we would not need leaders. The people you are expected to lead have their own personalities, backgrounds and baggage that make them who they are. Bringing those variations together and getting them all to work for a common cause is what leaders do.

First and foremost, leaders should see their position as a responsibility to do the right thing and set a good example. Leaders should not try to use their position as a way to get out of responsibilities or to take advantage of systems or individuals.

We will make mistakes:

"Mistakes are the portals to discovery." James Joyce

Mistakes are part of life. They are also part of leadership. I will make mistakes, you will make mistakes, and your constituents will make mistakes. One of the toughest tasks that a leader has to do is to learn how to react and handle mistakes. The first thing to try and remember is to strive not to make decisions while you are angry. Here are suggestions you can do once a mistake has been made:

Judgment mistakes with your peers;

1. Realize that you have made a mistake. Own up.
2. Decide exactly what the mistake was and how you can make it right.
3. Apologize as quickly as you can.
4. Take time in private to be humble and make a sincere apology.
5. Remember that a mistake does not take away your credibility; several mistakes and mishandled mistakes take away your credibility. Move on and give it your all!!!

"Breaking a rule" type of mistakes;

1. Realize that you have made a mistake. Own up.
2. Realize that with this type of mistake, consequences are often attached.
3. You are not supposed to enjoy the consequences.

For leaders in the Cub Band, when mistakes are made, talk to a band director. Let's work through them together.

General Peer Leadership Information:

This section is split into the two essential elements for effective peer leadership: competency and personality.

Competency:

Do your Job:

Make sure you do what you are supposed to do. Get your music passed off. Try to be the first person in your section. Have your equipment in good working order. Have all of your music. The easiest way for a leader to lose credibility is to not do their job. This is the bare minimum for a leader. You start with the basics and then motivate and help your peers.

Over Achieve:

When you pass your music off, make sure you play and do the step-outs aggressively. When helping your peers, play with your very best sound, dynamics, and to the end of the notes. When you march, get your toes up and hold your instrument correctly. If you do everything to the best of your ability, the people around you will try harder. Your peers will believe that is the expectation.

Personality:

Be resourceful:

Find a way to get your task accomplished. If you try to get something done and you do not succeed the first time, do not give up. Use your brain and figure out a new angle until you accomplish your goal successfully. Try to make handouts, a different motivational tool, demonstrating instead of explaining, or brainstorm some other ideas.

Be willing to give extra help:

When your peers see you helping, it is confirmation that you care about the organization. If you run off when something needs to be done, it is a sign of disrespect to the organization. The best leaders want to be seen in a positive light whenever they can. **When you are asked to help with something, jump right in with a positive attitude.** Try to find others to pitch in also. The more people that help, the faster and better something gets done. Also, service is a great way to build bridges with your colleagues.

Be there. (On time):

It is a huge morale breaker if a leader skips out on their job or shows up late. In an organization like ours, we stress attendance and promptness. Your peers will have a difficult time following you if you are consistently late or not showing up. Sometimes we have leaders who lie about attendance and tardiness. Their peers discover they are lying and those leaders quickly lose credibility.

Consistently Set a Good Example:

In and out of rehearsal, your peers will observe your actions. When you have a good attitude, it will be noticed and respected by others. They will buy into what you are trying to get them to do. If you are inconsistent in your actions and behaviors, your constituents will notice that as well. When you try to teach or motivate your peers, they will be less likely to trust and follow because of your inconsistencies.

Show Confidence:

You are a leader because you and your peers felt like you were ready to take on this responsibility and lead them to success. That should make you feel confident. Carry yourself proudly and talk with authority. Move rapidly from task to task. Demonstrate with perfection. Your peers will recognize your confidence and they will listen more intently and be more receptive to your positive criticism.

Be positive:

The old adage "You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar," certainly applies to leadership. If you want your constituents to understand what you are trying to communicate, they have to believe that you are passionate about what you are trying to get them to do. Be up-beat, excited, and eager to make things better. Your peers will be more likely to listen and accomplish your goals fast and accurately.

If you give 100%, your constituents will give about 60%. The more energy you want to obtain from your peers, the more positive energy you will have to display to motivate them to continue working hard.

Phrase things in a positive way when criticizing your peers. Avoid saying things like, "You Suck," or other negative phrases. Use language like you did "A" good, now can you make "B" better, or I really liked the way you did "A," now lets work on "B." If positive criticism is practiced, the result will steadily improve. Phrasing criticism in a negative way is a guaranteed way to lose respect and alienate yourself from your constituents.

Help your peers:

Help them get their music passed off. Help them get their marching fundamentals passed off. Help them if they are struggling with a class. Try to listen when they are feeling overwhelmed. Caring about your peers builds bonds that, in turn, will give you respect. Think back to the leaders you have respected the most. They not only are knowledgeable teachers, they also cared about you. You could count on them if you needed something.

Give respect to get respect:

This very simple concept is critical in leadership. If your peers don't feel like you respect them, they will not respect you. Think about peers that have led you. When you felt like they respected your effort, opinions and intentions, you more likely followed and listened to them.

Get to know everybody; care about your peers:

Build relations with all of your constituents. Spend time away from rehearsal getting to know more about them. Find out where they live so you can help them get rides if they need them. Learn their phone number and what classes they may have trouble with. Keep up with them during the year and try to either help them or find someone to help them if they are struggling with classes or personal problems. Learn what other interests they have. Find out what kind of movies, music, or other things they like. As you learn more about them, you will be someone they feel comfortable in asking for advice and confiding in. Build a bond so when you are trying to teach them or encourage them, they will be more receptive to your input and positive criticism. They will feel like it is meant to help rather than as an insult.

Pay attention to the quiet guy:

One of the best things The Cub Band has done through the years is help the underdog. We have had several students with social challenges that have found a home in our band hall. That quiet person in your platoon could be scared and/or intimidated. They may need you to help them in ways other than music or marching. We are an organization that does want to be very good at what we do, but that should not be our only focus. You can be the person that helps someone have an outstanding high school experience. Without your help, some students will leave BHS without those excellent memories and friends that everyone deserves to have. Sometimes, it takes months even years to help some students. Be compassionate and patient.

Trust:

There are complete books written about trust and how it relates to leadership. It is safe to say that your constituents must trust you if you expect them to follow you. One of the most difficult aspects of leading students at a young age is regaining their peer's trust once it is lost.

As a young leader, do not dismiss false information. If you say one thing in a big group, don't say something else in private. It is difficult to trust people who talk behind someone's back. There are so many things to be said about trust, but if you think about it, you will have a very good sense of what are good ideas and bad ideas. In my experience, people generally become thicker-skinned and tolerant of untrustworthy behavior as they mature. They become more confident in themselves and are able to ignore what others say about them.

Listen to your peers. Let them have a voice:

I have never met a person that has figured everything out. The older I get the more I realize the truth in the old saying "The older I get, the more I have to learn." The oldest peer leader is 18. There are going to be other people in your section your age or older. Use them. You do not own the market on good ideas. It will make you a better leader and it will show your peers that you respect their experience and opinion.

Have an opinion:

You have been in the band long enough to see when things work and don't work. When we ask you a question, we are counting on you to give us an honest opinion so we can proceed in the best possible way. Remember, however, that there may be others that have a differing opinion. Even if you do not agree after we discuss and make a decision, work hard to make it the right decision. Just because things don't go the way you hoped, it is not in the band's best interest for you to undermine the decision.

Teaching Strategies

This section is split into two sections that are key to effective instruction, pacing and specific tactics you can use to get your message to your platoon.

Pacing

Fast in Pace...Slow in Concept:

As you are teaching your platoon, keep the pace very fast. Keep them marching or playing to avoid dead time. Don't get side tracked talking, doing push-ups, joking around, standing around, or other things that keep you from perfecting the concepts you are working on. The more repetitions you do, the better the concepts will be learned and the better we will be.

When you start a concept, stay on it until at least 85 to 90% of your platoon correctly and confidently understands the concept you are teaching. It is more important to focus on the quality of the product rather than how quickly we learn it. The concepts we ask you to work on and the music we ask you to pass off are the fundamental elements of our product. If we fundamentally look and sound good, we will be good. If you feel like things are going slowly, just remember that we have a plan. If we start falling behind that plan, we will let you know.

March, or play, a lot...talk a little:

Saying something is wrong does not fix the problem. Identifying that there is a problem informs the band that there is something that marching and/or playing correctly fixes. Keep marching or playing as much as possible. This will allow them to fix the problem. Talk very little because attention spans are short. Your peers will start daydreaming and they won't listen. When you talk, they have more of an opportunity to get off track. Try to say one thing and then continue marching. Only concentrate on one or two concepts between repetitions. The more repetitions you do, the better the concepts will be learned, and the better we will be.

Leave the Drama off of the Field:

You do not have time to have any personal conversations during rehearsal. If there is drama during rehearsal, we do not have enough time to do what we are trying to accomplish. The only way it works is if we make very effective use of our time.

Keep everybody involved:

Keep everybody involved in the learning process. I have never seen a band and thought, "that band marched fundamentals too much. Their fundamentals are too good." Remember, perfect practice makes perfect. Nobody is ever done with the marching fundamental process. When you have some people standing around doing nothing, they are going to be a distraction. It is difficult to get them back into the rehearsal mentally. Keep everybody marching and participating.

Teaching Tactics

Walk around:

Rather than standing in front of the ensemble all of the time, walk around to observe your platoon. You will see a lot of feet and posture issues from the side and the back. It will also give you a chance to see more marchers.

Give examples:

As you teach new concepts, provide a demonstration. Demonstrate yourself and ask other outstanding marchers in your platoon to demonstrate.

Praise sandwich:

Tell them something they did well. Give them some constructive criticism. Give them some encouragement.

Example. "I liked the way your legs were straight on the numbers. This time, let's make sure you get your left shoulder all the back. Come on, let's work hard, I know this can be better."

Tell them why:

Remember to explain why we do what we do.

Example. "I know it seems like we are doing this exercise over and over again, but we are trying to make this as easy as breathing. You will do it perfectly without even thinking about it."

Have patience:

Use phrases like, "I have been there before" or "Keep working at it" when you see students struggling with new concepts.

Give them constructive criticism rather than negative:

Try to phrase things in a positive way rather than negative.

Example. "Lets get those legs straight on the numbers just like this (show them a good example)," rather than, "Your legs were bent. Haven't you been paying attention?"

If someone is not getting it after you have said it positively several times, they could either have a coordination problem, be a slow learner, or have a bad attitude. Whatever the reason is, being mean is not going to fix any of those problems.

Solve the Problems:

When something is not going right, break the activity down and identify the problem. Then start piecing the activity back together until all the parts are fixed. Then run the entire drill. That is why we do not start with the box drill the first day of summer band. There are a lot of elements that need to be mastered before we teach a box drill so it can successfully be performed. Identifying the real problem is 80% of fixing it.

Use your old experienced marchers as a resource:

Send one experienced and compassionate marcher with someone who is struggling. They might not be able to fix the problem, but they can set the struggling person's emotions at ease and let them know we are not going to give up on them. It also allows you to move forward with the rest of the students you are working with.

Review:

If you start something new and it is a disaster, take a step back and review. Say to your platoon, "OK, that box drill was a little rough. Let's forward march 8 steps to review our basics. That was great! Now let's apply those concepts to the box we just tried."