

# ATTENTION ON RETENTION



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# — ∞ — ATTENTION ON RETENTION — ∞ —

A program's **retention** rate is as good as, if not better than, an indicator of program strength moreso than its enrollment numbers.

## — ∞ — REASONS CHILDREN QUIT BAND:

- Fear of failure
- Conflicts with sports and other activities
- Time commitment
- Boredom

We have the ability to control ALL of the above.

## — ∞ — Reasons Children Might Lose Interest in Band:

- May be struggling, due to lack of understanding or effort (or combination of both)
- May not be challenged
- Another activity is more fun, challenging, or interesting
- May be experiencing social problems at school, such as bullying and teasing
- May be embarrassed by having to carry instruments
- Band isn't cool or performances are poor quality (goes back to teasing and bullying)

## — ∞ — Ways to Increase Enjoyment for Students:

- Play music that is fun and challenges all students.
- Run a high-energy, fast-paced, and engaging rehearsal. Be fun while being good.
- Perform more often – students didn't join band to practice!
- Keep playing (sparingly) in summer. Don't create opportunity to quit.
- Teach rhythm counting constantly (students who can't count are confused and embarrassed).
- Notice THEM! Wow. Children just want to matter to someone. Notice them.

## — ∞ — The Trombonist Perspective!

Why should I practice? This thing is AWKWARD. It's embarrassing to carry and I get made fun of all the time. If I played flute or clarinet, I could hide it. If I played tuba, you would have a practice horn for me, so I could avoid it all together. So I suffer and take it home only to find boring half notes and lame parts. So fun. Then I come to rehearsal and you spend almost the whole rehearsal working on the woodwind parts. So I sit...bored again. So I don't practice. Why should I? Then I show up...mess up and get embarrassed in class. I think I might quit.

## — ∞ — Ways to Engage Children in Rehearsal:

- Keep the horn on their faces. Keep playing. Keep instructions short and effective.
- Assign active participation roles (CCT, Tizzle, peer assessment).
- Use gaming strategies.
- Use alarm to ensure pacing is appropriate.

## — ∞ — The GAMES People Play:

- |                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Cereal Killer                       | • Wheel of Doom              |
| • Duelin' Bandos                      | • Band Olympics              |
| • Team Competitions                   | • In Tune App                |
| • Vocabulary Ball (Thanks, Mike Doll) | • Tokens and Challenge Slips |

To compete or not to compete – that is the question. I am insanely competitive. I thrive on it. It motivates me. Not all children are the same. Some are frightened to death by the thought of competing. We all know the UP side of competition and chair tests, and I do use them in class. However, let's consider the DOWN side for a moment. Maybe by understanding the DOWN side, we can make the competitive experience safer for our students.

### **The DOWN Side of Chair Tests:**

- It demoralizes lower-chair players, lowers their self-worth, and serves as a daily reminder that they are failing.
- It embarrasses them in front of their peers – the kiss of death.
- Students with disabilities are often harmed the most.
- It is not always an accurate indicator of hard work.
- A child who only plays exclusively third part will not practice and may quit.

### **How to Make “Chairs” Safer for Students:**

- Keep chairs as fluid as possible.
- Reinforce the truth that chairs are temporary and not a judgment against the child.
- Teach younger students that auditions are “research for next year” or the pre-season.
- Remind them that student's ability (like their height) progresses at different rates – it's ok.
- Share your own failures and successes with students. Be human.
- Consider a progressive chair test, involving many events to allow a child to recover.
- Teach that “The GOAL is more important than the ROLE they play.”

### **The Parent's Perspective:**

Band is expensive. Not only in money, but time and commitment. Often, parents are looking for the first sign of dissatisfaction to find a way out. They don't want to be the mean parent and force their child to drop, so they let us set the table. Let's look at the REAL cost of band.

- Instrument (\$35-\$70 per month, not counting step-up instruments)
- Supplies
- Books and materials
- SmartMusic
- Private instruction
- Band fees
- Trips
- Time obligations
- Fights at home over practicing
- Difficult schedules

### **Combating the COST Argument:**

- Scholarships for all free and reduced lunch students/special needs situations
- Grants, donations, corporate sponsorships
- Work toward home/school instrument inventory
- Sectionals or shared lessons for motivated students
- Engage and educate parents about band
- Communicate transparently and often with parents

### **Finally...TEACHER Responsibilities to Our Students and Families:**

- WE are responsible for building interest in music.
- WE must design fun, fast-paced, and effective rehearsals.
- WE must assess learning and interest levels daily.
- WE must identify what doesn't work and fix it.
- We must teach and reach each child wherever they are.
- WE must offer solutions, not just identify problems.

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