



TOUCHPOINT

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SIX WISHES

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When discussing with instrumental ensemble conductors, I have noticed the following concerns or wishes:

1. "I wish my students would practice more."
2. "I wish my students would focus more during rehearsal."
3. "I wish my students were more motivated."
4. "I wish I could teach more than notes and rhythms during rehearsals."
5. "I wish my students wouldn't talk after every release."
6. "I wish students wouldn't drop out of my ensemble."

As a response to the six common wishes stated above, I propose the following questions to consider:

- Are the students aware of your expectations and goals? Have the students been part of the goal making process? Are the students excited about the repertoire? Do they feel valued for their efforts? Have the students been taught the skill of practicing effectively?
- Are the students aware of your expectations and standards for focus? Are you actively engaging them in rehearsal with energy, pacing, and directed listening? Are they being taught musical concepts that have application beyond one piece? Do they feel valued for their focus in rehearsal?
- Are you motivated on the podium or are you "going through the motions?" Do the students feel motivated? Do the students have personal, sectional, and ensemble goals? Do the students feel any responsibility to become motivated and to motivate others?
- What do you emphasize in rehearsal? Do you emphasize notes and rhythms in rehearsal? While notes and rhythms are important, do the students understand this expectation is only the first step to learning a piece? Do students know your expectation is to learn the notes and rhythms at home and that rehearsals are a place to learn everyone else's part? Are students expected to be individually expressive musicians or artists who only do the conductor's bidding?
- Have students been part of the goal setting and classroom management process? Do the students understand how talking interferes with the goals of the ensemble? Do the students feel like collaborators in the process or like automatons? Do the students feel valued as an active participant in the pursuit of excellence?
- Do your students feel valued by you? Do your students feel connected to you? Have you made any changes this year that did not allow students to participate in the decision making process? Are your rehearsals engaging and artistic?

Perhaps after we begin to answer some of these questions we will transform our "wish list" into a "to do" list. This "to do" list will serve as a guide to adapt your teaching, streamline your rehearsal, engage your students, and develop an effective classroom environment that achieves results.