

A grayscale photograph of a man with glasses playing a saxophone. He is wearing a dark shirt and is positioned in front of a rack of saxophones. The image is faded and serves as a background for the title text.

A Practical Guide **for** Recruitment **and** Retention

The most complete manual on recruiting and retention for beginning instrumental music, compiled from ideas and practices of music teachers, music dealers and the music products industry.

Produced by the Music Achievement Council

The **Music Achievement Council** (MAC) is an action-oriented nonprofit organization sponsored by the National Association of Band Instrument Manufacturers (NABIM), the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) and the International Music Products Association (NAMM). MAC is made up of three representatives from NABIM, three from NASMD and one from NAMM. The group's purpose is to promote instrumental music participation with particular emphasis on producing materials that encourage and motivate students to join, and stay, in band and orchestra. The council was formed in 1983 and reorganized in 1990, forming a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

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Recruiting for beginning instrumental music is a year-round job. Although the director's task may be challenging, there is a great deal and variety of help available.

This booklet describes recruiting methods being used successfully today by directors in schools throughout the country. Some methods differ widely, but all are techniques that have been tested in action and are proven to work. The content here reflects the combined experience of successful educators and school music dealers. That is why this is a practical guide to recruiting and retention for veteran teachers, beginning teachers and future teachers.

One key person not in this booklet is you. It is up to you to add your personality and style to the techniques explained. You can do this by:

- Rewriting the sample letters
- Designing your own forms
- Setting up schedules that fit your school system
- Giving everything your personal touch

The yearly cycle presented in this publication is designed to increase the number of students recruited and keep them in the program. Two methods to improve retention run through this booklet:

- Don't miss any prospective students, especially the good ones — high quality is one of the keys to retention
- Don't try to avoid dropouts — rather, strive to improve retention

This entire booklet is contained on the enclosed cdrom. You can tailor any of the contents to your needs. The booklet is also available as downloadable word documents on line at www.musicachievement.com.

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part 1 Introduction

recruitment

If it were necessary to explain or justify the study of music to you, you would not be reading this guide. Children don't need justification — they just want to play because it looks like fun. Fortunately, music education has been the subject of countless scientific studies showing its value to children as part of their total education. Without a well-planned and organized recruiting effort, however, most public school instrumental music programs would not thrive.

For a number of reasons, recruiting enough students to keep instrumental music healthy is becoming more important and more difficult at the same time:

- In many areas, school enrollment is declining
- There are more demands on students' time
- There are more homes with two working parents and single parents
- School budgets are being cut
- No Child Left Behind puts renewed emphasis on academic testing

Two details make this situation alarming

1. There isn't much you can do about many of these problems, but that's OK.
2. Many administrators and school boards base budget decisions on student numbers — this is OK, too. Therefore it is vital to the future of instrumental music to recruit and retain as many students as possible.





Children join an instrumental music program (band or orchestra) and stick with it if:

- The director is enthusiastic and makes learning fun
- Parents, community and school boards support the program
- The instrumental music program is visible in the community

So this is what you have to do:

- Foster student interest
- Inform their parents
- Develop a continuing program for nurturing the support of the school, the administration and the community

This guide will explain how successful teachers and music dealers have made recruitment an exciting and vital part of their teaching.



Organize for Success

Recruiting for instrumental music is still full of mysteries and surprises. To help you in this process, there are three very important people you should know.

1. The school secretary, who will help set up the recruiting program and open lines of communication within the school and with your students and their parents
2. The head custodian, who is the key to organizing the availability and management of all in-school facilities
3. The full-service music dealer, who will handle your rentals, repairs, music and accessories, and whose representative will visit you on a regular basis

Quick Checklist for Choosing a Music Dealer

Do they provide the following?

- Regular visits by an educational representative — often a former music educator
- Sales and service departments that are readily accessible by phone, fax and e-mail
- A large inventory of music and educational materials, including an approval plan
- A complete repair service, including loaner instruments
- An extensive line of accessories for all instruments
- An order, delivery and collection system that will not make demands on your time
- A choice among the most widely accepted instrument brands
- Materials for making your entire program run more smoothly — including music folders, administrative forms, schedule calendars, audio/visual aids and materials available from the music products industry
- Studio facilities and private teachers, who may also be important assets to your program

Orchestrate Your Publicity

Newspapers, television and e-mail are the fastest and most effective means of reaching a large number of people but may not be the most effective way of successfully reaching students and parents as part of your recruitment program. Your entire music education department must continually advocate the value of a complete music education. In addition, you must emphasize to the parents of potential students the value of participating in instrumental music.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Use school bulletin boards
- Use school newspapers
- Use school and district newsletters
- Use PTA announcements
- Use direct communication by phone, fax and e-mail
- Use concert programs
- Use school announcements
- Enlist the help of other teachers



Enlist Dealer Help

Educational representatives are experienced in working with music educators in setting up successful recruiting programs. Most have extensive experience and can help in setting up and carrying out demonstrations, testing and implementing follow-up techniques to keep students in the program.

Understand the School Calendar

There are many school and after-school activities, so enlist the aid and support of school employees — especially the principal. You will need to set dates and times well in advance to avoid conflicts so the following are as successful as possible:

- Instrument demonstrations
- Student surveys
- Parent meetings
- First Performance Demonstration Concert
- Mass Band/Orchestra Concert

Recruitment Preparation

- Meet with classroom teachers and general music teachers to help plan the recruiting process and identify potential future instrumentalists
- Gather information pertaining to prospective students' scholastic level, natural ability and work and discipline habits

Select and Collect Recruiting Materials

Get to know what materials are available from your music dealer and the music products industry, then choose the materials that will work best for you.

Materials available may include:

- DVDs and videocassettes
- Posters
- Surveys and survey forms
- Pamphlets for parents and students
- Various forms and worksheets

Make your requests well in advance and be sure your dealer or other supplier knows:

- What you want
- How many you want
- When you need the materials

Recruiting Is a Year-Round Job

Recruiting and retention to-do list:

- Inform students and parents
- Inform others including: administrators, teachers, PTA, press
- Survey students
- Build interest
- Meet students and parents
- Have students choose instruments
- Equip students through rental or other programs
- Sustain student interest
- Engage parent support
- Provide satisfying musical experiences including a First Performance demonstration concert, which is available from the Music Achievement Council or your local school music dealer.

Recruitment is a yearlong job. Many directors feel recruitment isn't really part of their job, but your success in the recruitment process is directly related to your success as an educator. More and better students equal a better instrumental music program.



There are many timetables that will help you complete the list above. The following is a good starting place. Adjust to your school calendar and to your own needs and style. The task is to get information to people and to be sure they remember it.

One-Year Recruiting Calendar

- Sometime in fall, set up your annual schedule. Include a recruiting meeting with students (see page 10), a parent meeting (see page 11), and a First Performance demonstration concert
- February–March: Visit with general music teacher, and observe and speak with recorder classes
- April–May: Recruiting instrument demonstration and instrument try-out with students. (Many like to have the recruiting meeting as soon as students come back to school in fall rather than before school is dismissed the previous year.) Send a letter to parents describing the beginning instrumental music program and invite them to a mandatory parent meeting (see page 13)
- 1 week later: Parent meeting and instrument rental. Include expectations, lesson schedule and practice commitment
- 1 week after that: Follow up on students who did not sign up
- Program begins. (If the cycle begins at the end of the prior school year, the program begins when school begins)
- + 6 to 8 weeks: A First Performance demonstration concert should take place. Have administration involved and make an extra effort to have all parents attend
- Feb–May: A Mass Band/Parade of Bands Concert with the recorder class, the elementary, middle and high school band performing independently and together. Note: Starting concert season earlier in the calendar year gives student's a culminating experience before they register for next year's classes and potentially avoids more drop-outs.

Recruitment Meeting with Student Checklist

Use this as a checklist of points you should cover in your style. Your music dealer can be of great assistance in this process.

Opening

- Introduce yourself and establish rapport
- Describe the reasons for joining. Highlight the fun, but explain there is work involved in learning an instrument — but not as much as they may think
- Get students actively involved: Clap call and response rhythms, questions about instruments

Demonstration

- Show each instrument — ask its name and family
- Play recruitment DVD
- Explain how sound is produced and how pitches are changed
- Demonstrate each instrument, and avoid reinforcing stereotypes (girls play flute, etc.)

Instrument Try Out

- Discuss the need for balanced instrumentation
- Have students try instruments and indicate first and second instrument choice

Survey

- Explain the survey in simple terms
- Give the survey

Closing

- Collect surveys, and correct them
- Distribute materials for students to take home to parents — you may wish to mail and e-mail this information as well
- Thank students for their time, attention, interest and good behavior
- Develop recruiting priority list coordinating student assessments, interest and instrument preference
- Thank classroom teachers for their valuable time and help in the recruiting process
- Contact parents and students who have been recommended by other teachers but who have not shown interest; continue your recruiting campaign



Knowledge is Power

Let parents and students know all about the music program.

Your first communication should include:

- When new classes are being formed
- The rewards of participating in music
- The idea that active parental support is necessary
- Program details — rehearsal times
- Your expectations

Your second communication should include:

- Time and place of parent meetings. All meetings should be as short as possible — let parents know you respect their time
- RSVP form to be signed and returned (see page 13)
- Details about choosing an appropriate instrument
- Information on rental programs or school-owned instruments, if applicable

The Parent Meeting

It is very helpful to have more than one person representing the music program at this meeting. Other members of your staff and your local music dealer representative are the best participants. Even though this is an extremely important event, understand that parents and guardians have very busy schedules, so keep this and other meetings as short as possible. This will allow for maximum attendance.

Parent Meeting Checklist

- Register parents as they arrive — you already may have a list for them to just check off
- Introductory remarks:
 1. Have a music-booster parent make a short, positive statement about the music program and its influence on children.
 2. Thank parents for their interest in their child's education.
 3. Explain beginning music program and the parent's role.
 4. Introduce the people represented, including those from the local music dealer.
- Describe physical aptitudes and limitations
- Have the music dealer representative explain brand preferences, options and rental plans available
- If you have individual meetings:
 1. Have parents look at instruments and advocacy material
 2. Go over student test scores, teacher evaluations, instrument preferences and recommendations

All of the above are ideas that must be adjusted to your own situation. In some cases, directors like to do all the recruiting and meeting with parents. They may have the music dealer supply materials and do the paperwork for signing up the new music students. In some cases, prescreening and instrumental preferences are not sought before the meeting, but are done at the parent meeting and in individual meetings. Remember to announce the date of the First Performance demonstration concert. Emphasize that it is a fun demonstration of the student's progress.

Follow Through

Be aware of critical times in the recruitment process.

Immediately, within one week, after the instrument demonstration to the students:

- Follow up with all students who didn't sign up
- Follow up with letters, e-mails and phone calls reminding parents of the meeting date
- Ease concerns about being stuck with a costly instrument and long hours of practice
- Reinforce the benefits of music for their child



Immediately after the parent meeting:

- Have a plan for parents who had a schedule conflict with the meeting time
- Make it simple and convenient for them to sign up
- Your music dealer can help with follow-up

Keys to Student Success

It is the director's responsibility to capture the students' attention, sustain their interest and earn their support.

- Realize time conflicts with sports, other classes, school activities and jobs
 - Understand each student as an individual
 - Build appreciation for the musical group
 - Give recognition for their effort and accomplishments — badges, medals, guest clinicians, printed certificates, attendance at special events
- Know that everyone has a fear of failure — constantly praise and reinforce that there is no failure in music. Give formal awards, informal praise and constant encouragement

Be a Music Educator

Directors often think students don't appreciate the value and benefits of music education. In many cases, what are perceived as benefits of music participation have little to do with music.

They include the development of:

- Social skills
- Responsibility
- Self-confidence
- Coordination
- Teamwork

Although highly regarded by students and parents, these benefits are really by-products of music participation. You must never lose sight of the fact that you are also developing students who will have a lifelong appreciation of music. Keep the musical values on the top of your list!

Sample Parent Letter: Beginning of Recruitment Process

The following are paragraphs that you can use to develop a letter that fits your situation.

Each year at this time, students eagerly wait their turn to join our music program. The study of music could be one of the most valuable steps in your child's education. Current research shows that playing an instrument increases brain development and — along with developing responsibility, mental discipline, teamwork and self-esteem — will provide enjoyment while fostering a lifelong appreciation of music and other arts.

To find the most promising beginners, we give a musical aptitude survey to all students in your child's grade. We are pleased to report that your child's results were very favorable and that your child is considered a good prospect for the school's instrumental music program.

Our beginning instrumental music class for next year is now being organized. During our registration meeting, I will describe schedules, lessons and instruments and answer any questions you may have. It is important that parents and guardians attend this meeting. It will be held on [day and date] at [time] at [place]. We understand you have a busy schedule and will make the meeting short but informative.

All instruction is free, and all that is necessary for you to do is obtain an instrument for the student. A good-quality instrument is essential for your child's success. For your convenience, I have asked a representative from _____, our music dealer, to have instruments available to rent. I believe a rental plan is advisable. Please be ready to make a deposit for the instrument.

I hope you agree with my belief that every child should have the chance to participate in music, to understand it and to appreciate it. I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me at [phone number] or e-mail me at [e-mail address].

Please fill in and return this questionnaire before [date]:

1. I would like my child to enroll in beginning band _____ orchestra _____
2. I will attend the parent meeting Yes _____ No _____ I have a schedule conflict; please call me at _____ or _____
3. Parent _____
Address _____ E-mail address _____
4. Student's name _____ Telephone _____
5. Do you have an instrument? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, what is it? _____
6. What instrument are you most interested in? _____

sample

parent letter

Sample Parent Letter:

Outlining Goals of the Instrumental Music Program

Our overall goal is to provide positive growth for all students through the study of music. We provide a music study program, which will teach all students to:

- Enjoy working with others
- Develop individual skills for social life
- Know music through familiarity with specific compositions
- Experience the thrill of playing well with and for others
- Understand and meet the requirements for the National Standards for Arts Education in Music

Pupil growth through music will be gained by learning to:

- Concentrate on the job at hand
- Play an instrument in class
- Prepare for lessons at home
- Listen to the playing of others
- Develop a musical ear
- Develop rhythmic and melodic feeling
- Play individually and in groups at school, home and in the community
- Accept criticism by teachers, parents, classmates and the public
- Find satisfaction through music activities

How Parents Can Help

At home:

- Show interest in what the student is studying
- Provide a good-quality instrument
- Give praise and encouragement
- Arrange a regular time for practice — 15 to 30 minutes a day is better than longer amounts of time every few days
- Find a quiet place for your child to practice without interruptions
- Provide an adjustable-height music stand
- Help and support practice
- Never make fun of strange sounds made in the beginning
- Help keep a daily record of practice time
- Provide a safe place to keep the instrument
- Keep the instrument in good repair
- Teach the student to be on time for lessons and rehearsals
- Encourage the student to play for others

At school:

- Keep a record of the student's various music activities
- Notify the director if the student is going to be absent
- Make sure your child takes his/her instrument and other music items to school on lesson or rehearsal days
- Teach punctuality
- Be sure all other classroom studies are accomplished
- Visit rehearsals and lessons occasionally
- Discuss with the director unique needs or characteristics of the student
- Attend all concerts and parent meetings
- Help with parent activities
- Advocate for music education in the schools

Director's Recruiting Checklist

Planning:

- Recruitment time (spring or fall)
- Meet with classroom and general music teachers
- Select method book(s)
- Meet with principal and other school personnel
- Meet with school music dealer
- Schedule dates for all student and parent meetings
- Determine instruments needed for a balanced instrumentation
- Schedule dates for First Performance Demonstration and Mass Band concerts

Confirmation:

- Contact principal(s) 3 to 5 days before each scheduled program to confirm all particulars
- Have all supplies needed for each type of meeting

Student recruitment meeting:

- Arrive 30 minutes early
- Meet with principal
- Prepare materials and instruments
- Distribute survey cards and pencils
- Introduce music dealer
- Distribute parent letters and explain
- Collect survey cards
- Distribute posters to teachers for classroom display — also in cafeteria and halls
- Thank principal, teachers and students

Parent follow-up:

- Sort survey cards by interest and aptitude
- Select students to assist in telephone and/or e-mail campaign
- Check facility for parent meeting — space, ventilation, chairs and tables, locking and unlocking building, directions
- Reconfirm meeting time, date and location
- Conduct phone and e-mail campaign
- Visit classrooms to remind students of parent meeting

Parent meeting:

- Arrive 30 minutes early
- Have parent-boosters at door to welcome prospective parents and students
- Director meets with parents and students
- Parents and students meet with music dealer representative

sample Sample Forms

form

Sample Student Evaluation by Classroom Teacher

Name _____

Age _____ Grade _____

1. Scholastic Level:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

5. Cooperation with Teacher:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

2. Scholastic Capabilities:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

6. Cooperation with Others:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

3. Work Habits:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

7. Recommendations:

a. Pupil would be a credit to band/orchestra _____

b. Band/orchestra could improve this student _____

c. Participation questionable _____

d. Comments _____

4. Discipline:

a. Outstanding _____

b. Good _____

c. Average _____

d. Poor _____

For Directors Only:

Test Score

Recommended Instrument

Sample Telephone Recruiting Script

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling for _____, the band director at _____ [school.] In the recently conducted survey of the _____ grade students in the elementary school, _____ [student's name] had a very high music aptitude rating and showed a lot of interest in learning to play a band/orchestra instrument. We hope you will encourage _____ [student's name] by giving him/her the opportunity to join our fine program.

Sample Instrumental Music Recruiting Meeting Survey (To be filled out by the parent)

Student's Name _____ Parent's Name _____

Street Address _____ City _____

Phone _____ School _____ Grade _____

What instrument is the student interested in learning? _____

Do you have that instrument? Yes ___ No ___ Comments _____

Sample Instrumental Music Progress Report

Dear Parent,

This letter is to inform you of your child's progress in our music program. The students have been given weekly assignments to study and practice. The evaluation of all students is based on these assignments plus class work. Factors considered include the understanding of the music studied, attentiveness in class, the ability to perform assignments, time spent studying and practicing and interest. I am happy to say that _____ [student's name] is doing very well. The following are my suggestions for continued improvement: _____

Please call (phone number) _____ or e-mail (e-mail address) _____

if you have any questions or concerns.

sample

form

Sample Report to Parent

Date _____ School _____ Call _____

Just a note regarding _____ [student's name] work in instrumental music. First, let me thank you for helping me help your child. Please sign and return this note, and feel free to call me at _____ [phone number] if you have any questions regarding your child's progress.

Had an unusually good day and I wanted you to know _____

2. Class preparedness is: **Excellent** ____ **Good** ____ **Fair** ____

3. Completion of required work is: **Excellent** ____ **Good** ____ **Fair** ____

4. Progress is: **Excellent** ____ **Good** ____ **Fair** ____

5. Attitude in class is: **Cheerful and cooperative** _____

In need of improvement _____

6. Was absent the following days: _____

7. Was tardy the following days: _____

8. Attended class without: Instrument _____ Music _____

9. Assignment not prepared on: _____ Today's assignment is: _____

10. Needs the following materials: _____

11. Instrument needs the following repair: _____

Comments: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Sample Request for Parent Support Group

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ **ZIP Code:** _____

Place of Employment: _____

Work Phone: _____ E-mail address _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Place of Employment: _____

Work Phone: _____ Preferred method of contact _____

Student's Name: _____ School: _____

I/We would like to assist the music program in the following ways

(please check all appropriate areas):

___ Telephone Committee

___ Publicity Committee

___ Programs (printing, designing, etc.)

___ Ushering at concerts

___ Assisting teacher during the day — administration and/or office work

___ Transportation for special concerts, rehearsals or performances during the ___
daytime or ___ at night or ___ weekends

___ Chaperoning student activities

___ Planning student activities (parties, trips, etc.)

___ Providing baked goods (student refreshments, receptions, etc.)

___ Aid in setting up for concerts

___ Other (please comment)