



**Recruiting: What Works for Me**  
**Sandy Hinkley, Choral Director**  
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**My TEACHING background...**

I have been teaching in the Orlando area for fourteen years, most of which were spent on the middle school level. Throughout this time I have taught at five different schools, some of which were low income areas with high levels of minority students. I have taught in various kinds of situations, including block scheduling and opening a new school. When I was first hired at Glenridge Middle school four years ago, I had 78 kids in my program. Today, I have 200+ students in my choral program. Below are recruiting strategies which have brought me success throughout the years.

**GENERAL things which have established success in my program are...**

- Establishing a successful and quality program based on music standards and individual student assessment
- Creating a positive and creative environment where all students are welcome
- Using a combination of aural, visual, and kinesthetic teaching strategies so that all learning styles are met
- Making diverse and well-rounded musical choices
- Establishing positive relationships with my music colleagues so students are not competitive between programs
- Creating social opportunities that foster friendships and emotional bonds
- Attending non-musical events which my students are a part of (soccer games, awards ceremonies)
- Structuring performances (especially MPA) so that all level of groups can be successful; often involves combining lower level kids with upper level
- Involving more than just my top students with MPA, Solo/Ensemble, and other special events

**Some IMPORTANT things I learned which drastically affect this process are ...**

- The importance of learning how to read a master schedule and staying involved in the scheduling process; establishing a real solid relationship with all administrators
- The importance of establishing a good relationship with my guidance counselors, and continually educating them as to why it is beneficial to student learning for them to be placed in certain classes
- The importance of staying active in music organizations, in order to be aware of issues before they negatively impact my program
- The importance of establishing a leadership role within my district (serving on curriculum writing teams, etc) to continually improve the quality of my students' learning

**At the BEGINNING of each school year I...**

- Visit every classroom during my planning period with recruiting forms
- Have contests between my classes of who can recruit the most kids (this can backfire if I don't talk about the importance of recruiting students who want to be there)
- Am visible during the first few weeks of school (in the courtyard, in the lunchroom, in the bus loop, in the halls between classes)
- Go on the morning announcements with clips from previous concerts and plug the program
- Try to be super creative and fun during the first weeks of school while still focusing on the important music fundamentals
- Establish emotional bonds with the students through team building activities (I want them to know that the program is more than just about music)
- Establish clear discipline expectations, so that the environment is one of mutual respect



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**DURING the Year to recruit I...**

- Put on a Fall Concert which involves a group from one feeder elementary school and the feeder high school; this recruits for all levels and promotes lifelong music education
- Plan social events with the high school music program (our band students do this as well with football games and marching MPA)
- Invite the high school directors to work with my students
- Visit my feeder elementary schools with and without students
- Create at least one event for just the boys to make them feel important; could be a Boys “Retreat”, a day with the high school boys, a special guest with a pizza lunch, anything to promote a positive experience with singing
- Showcase pictures of concerts and other events so that all students in the school can see (bulletin boards, on my windows, etc)
- Attend as many music events within my school to pull in students from other music programs (nothing beats having a student who is enrolled in two music programs!)
- Carefully choose performance opportunities which positively represent what the program is about

**At the END of the Year I**

- Perform for the incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders (at an Orientation night or I go over to the schools)
- Have “bring a friend to rehearsal” day
- Hand out recruiting forms early (at least a month before school lets out)
- Go on the morning announcements and show clips of concerts throughout current school year
- Put on a “Spring Fling” concert which is basically a mini musical; works really well after the intense MPA experience
- Create traditions (at end our Spring Concert we perform the same song, and in the middle I do a dedication to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders where I give each a special gift with a hand-written message)

**During the SUMMER I..**

- Reflect on the year, and plan ahead; come up with creative ideas to make things fun for returning kids
- Find workshops and ways to improve myself as a teacher; I try to always remember that for many kids I may be one of their only positive role models
- Touch base with the guidance counselors and administration to make sure scheduling issues and problems are resolved before pre-planning
- Leave recruiting forms and flyers with guidance counselors and the front office