



# Music Ed Insights



Key Insights from...

## Excellence Doesn't Have a Number: Susan Smith on Small Band Empowerment

### Redefine Success

- Excellence doesn't have a number.
- Success = students:
  - Growing in skills (tone, time, style, listening).
  - Experiencing great, age-appropriate literature.
  - Feeling proud to say, "Listen to what I can do."
- Remember: "Absence of error is not music."

### Teach the Students in Front of You

- Program for who is actually in the room.
- Let curriculum drive literature:
  - "By year's end, what do I want them to know and be able to do?"
- For small/imbalanced ensembles:
  - Don't imitate a large ensemble sound.
  - Choose music that lets them make real music, not just survive notes.
  - In flex settings, assign parts for balance, not just coverage.

### Culture & Relationships > Ratings

- Build a want-to-be-here culture.
- Celebrate small wins:
  - Everyone prepared.
  - One phrase shaped beautifully.
  - A tough spot finally feels confident.
- Seek helpful feedback:
  - Favor events and adjudicators who give specific "how to improve" comments.
  - Invite retired/experienced teachers into your room.
- Do PR in your own building:
  - Support colleagues' programs.
  - Share your students' successes in clear, simple language.

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