

PEAK BAND PERFORMANCE

an ongoing study by Ben P. Fritz

Over the past 10 years, I have had the opportunity to visit with, and observe over 50 bands: two in Washington D.C., two in Indiana, three in the state of Ohio, four in the state of Maryland, eight in the state of California, 14 in the state of Virginia, and 21 in the state of Michigan. Without exception, the best bands have exhibited four characteristics of excellence and the weaker bands have always had one or more of the key characteristics missing or in need of improvement. Winning bands will always have "Peak" practices, and weaker bands will always need to improve in one or more of these areas of excellence.

P.E.A.K. = Pride Entity Attitude Kindness

PRIDE - Every excellent band has pride. You can feel it the moment you walk into the room. Pride is usually exhibited by obvious visual signs such as the look and feel of the group in uniform, room neatness, horn angles, etc. . One can usually judge the pride level of a band in less than one minute, and a careful observer will see the pride in the bands' eyes.

ENTITY - Every good band has an identity or entity of its own. The group seems to become one large living being with one goal. The entity of a band is easily measured by its attention to directions, its focus of concentration, and its special group qualities. A well entitized band has many moments of "magic" when for no apparent reason it will start a piece of music together, end together, breathe together, and feel the same feelings at the same time. Entity is the team element in band. A successful band will have the appearance of one group instead of a gathering of individuals.

ATTITUDE - Every good band has a positive attitude. An attitude that it will be the best possible, that it will work hard early to be prepared, and a confidence that it can handle challenges in a 'heads up' manner. Superior attitude is felt as much as observed. Outstanding bands will often get to work on a problem without talking about it. An attention to detail and an anticipatory correction of mistakes are prevalent in great bands.

KINDNESS - Every excellent band that I have observed exhibits a kindness which helps it to be better than average. The most obvious examples are when accomplished players take the time to work with younger players. The best groups clearly understand that a positive reinforcing comment will motivate better than a negative biting one. In outstanding bands, section leaders often stay after to help weaker players learn their parts. Every member of the group is part of a family feeling when trying to improve together and the group forms its own in-house support group for any personal problems that may arise.

The P.E.A.K. band is difficult to find. If a band program is struggling, I have always been able to trace the cause to a missing P.E.A.K. element and without exception, when bands are excellent; all the peak elements are there !!!!!