Strategies for Teaching Strings
Ch. 9: String Student Recruitment and Retention

• **Why Recruit?**
  - to find out which students are interested in string study and to contact them
  - to continue building your program and to keep your job!

• **How to Recruit!**
  - Gather Information: students name, parent/guardian, address, phone, e-mail
  - See if school has tradition of recruitment activity
  - Ask principal for help with dates/venues
  - Decide whether recruitment should be in the fall or spring
    - Spring –
      - it may be possible to have summer instruction
      - may have to wait until fall to start instruction
      - students may move or change mind
    - Fall –
      - may delay start of program if you have to wait a few weeks into the semester to recruit
  - Contact schools you are recruiting from
    - Discuss dates to visit
    - Presenting to small or large groups?
    - Consider length of presentation
    - Determine equipment needed
    - Get class release time if using performing groups of students
    - Determine student and equipment transport
    - Plan music to play
    - Create handout or brochure to give to kids –
      - info on instruments
      - Info on further meetings
      - Info on use of string study
      - Info on program goals
      - Put on bright paper so it is easily distinguishable
  - Consider instrument balance
    - Some believe students should choose
    - Some believe director should decide what is best for the projected ensemble
  - Sign-up meeting
    - Discuss specifics of program
    - Discuss instrument selection and rental/purchase
    - Invite instrument dealers to help with:
      - Rosin, endpin holders, strings, etc
      - Method book
      - Instrument sizing and selection information
• **Parental Involvement**

  o Ensemble Handbook should be made and distributed to parents AND students including:
    ▪ Policies
    ▪ Behavior
    ▪ Practice
    ▪ Grading
    ▪ Concert Expectations
    ▪ Attendance
    ▪ Care of Music/Equipment
    ▪ Calendar
  o Find a place and time for parent meetings

• **Approaches to Recruitment**

  o Announcement and Test Approach
    ▪ least effective in recruitment
    ▪ includes emails, flyers, and aptitude tests
  o Lecture Method
    ▪ ask music teachers at other schools to include units on stings
  o Demonstration Routine
    ▪ visit classrooms and discuss/demonstrate bowed string instruments
  o Performance Procedure
    ▪ Host concert performances to interest potential students
    ▪ use student groups, string teachers in chamber settings, or guest artists
  o Hands-On Technique
    ▪ String students recruit other students to play
    ▪ Recruiters give lessons to the ones they recruit
    ▪ Create exploratory programs for the year prior to joining orchestra to learn the instruments

• **Retention (Motivation is KEY)**

  o Value student opinions and ideas
  o Give members positions of responsibility (section leaders, organization offices)
  o Fair but demanding entrance standards for ensembles so students are motivated to try harder to get into an “exclusive” organization
  o Play well and build a good reputation for the group
  o Go to contest or go on tour for publicity
  o Consider awards to recognize students
  o Create an aesthetically pleasing learning environment
  o Encourage private lessons
  o Chair tests or challenges
  o Consider social activities with group like concerts, conferences, or fund-raising activities because sometimes the ensemble is the only way kids in group socialize