



# PALEN MUSIC CENTER

B A N D A N D O R C H E S T R A

## Recruitment Guide

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### Fall Testing Schedule

The cornerstone of any successful high school band and orchestra program is its feeder program. Recruiting and retaining the right students is key to developing a positive music experience for everyone involved. Compiled from many directors across the Palen Music Center service area, these tips are provided to help you plan a successful recruitment program that will yield benefits for many years.

### BEFORE THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR (MAY)

- Meet with your principal. Discuss any curriculum and schedule changes that might affect the next school year. What elective classes will be offered? What will you be teaching? Ask for a day to work with next year's beginning class to give students the opportunity to learn about and play each instrument. About 30 minutes with 30 kids per session works well and does not interfere much with their daily routine. And, it's really fun for the kids!
- Send a letter informing potential parents of when the recruitment process will start. Encourage parents to wait to get an instrument until the school year begins. Ask your PMC representative for a copy of the "Do Nothing Letter" which can be customized to fit your needs. It features a FAQ section, informs parents of the upcoming rental night, and requests that parents wait until the rental night to obtain an instrument. This helps to ensure that students get the proper director-recommended equipment, that instruments are not handled by the students prior to instruction, and that bad habits are prevented from students who try to get started on their own during the summer.
- Schedule your instrument rental date with your PMC representative and put the date on the school calendar.

### BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR STARTS (JULY/AUGUST)

- Send an email to the elementary teachers requesting that you would like to speak with all students on the first day of school to encourage participation in the band or orchestra program.
- Line up guests to demonstrate each instrument or set up an assembly where you can have a small group perform for the students and then complete the demonstrations after the performance.
- Put together your recruiting presentation. The materials could include messages from existing members, photos of junior high and high school music



activities, demonstrations of each instrument, and photos of students having fun in band and orchestra.

- Reserve any audio-visual materials needed for your presentation (computer, projector, DVD player, screen, etc.)
- Type up a parent welcome letter with display night information, instrument rental information, the target instrumentation, reasons to join, and approximate prices. PMC is happy to provide template flyers that includes this basic information. Please visit with your PMC representative for more information.
- Prepare your instrument preference form to be used during instrument testing. This form will help direct students to instruments that are right for them and right for the desired instrumentation. PMC is happy to provide you with a template of this information.

## ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL (AUGUST)

- When the students come in the room, everything should look clean, organized, and inviting.
- Knock them out with enthusiasm, a big smile, and a dynamite presentation. Why should they join? Will it be fun? What's in it for them? If possible, invite your most energetic and engaging high school students to attend and share their positive experiences.
- Have your target instrumentation in mind and reinforce this from day one! An advantage to starting a streamlined and limited instrumentation is that you can focus your time on fewer variables. If you start percussion and/or saxophones, establish some methods to limit the number of players. Communicate these targets and your objective process to parents from the very beginning.
- Send home a welcome letter to the parents. Check with your PMC representative for a template. To ensure the kids bring it home, enlist the classroom teachers' help. They more than likely have a system for getting important information home from the school (example: "Friday folders").



## DAY TWO AND AFTER

- Plan the events listed below as your individual school schedule allows but try to get all items covered.
- Have guests come in to demonstrate each instrument. Have them show how to put it together, what the case looks like, and how to make a basic sound. Ha



*...it's about kids*

them play something flashy. Have them bring up a volunteer to show the group that almost anyone can make a sound on the instrument. It often works well to set up an assembly where you can have a small group perform for the students and then complete the demonstrations after the performance.

- Administer a music theory or instrumental music placement test (optional).

- Begin individual student testing. Have them come up in groups of 5 to try the mouthpiece or headjoint. Help steer them toward a good fit. Determine the instrument(s) on which the student can make the most beautiful natural sound.

- For percussion, have the student model rhythms that you demonstrate. Include some note name identification to identify students who have been paying attention in general music classes. Recruit piano players!! Stress that high grades and self-discipline are extremely important traits of the successful percussionist. An emphasis on keyboard percussion should always be made. Make them understand that they will not be “drummers,” but well-rounded musicians.



*...it's about kids*

- If you wish to limit the number of saxophone players, remind the students and parents that those instruments usually cost twice as much as other instruments. Inform parents that you will only be taking a set number of saxophone players and explain the selection process in advance.
- Once the testing is complete, students should fill out an instrument preference form. Have them choose their top three choices. Make sure they understand that the final decision is made by the director and is based on the students' preferences, the ability to produce a quality sound during testing, and the need for correct instrumentation. This system allows for the student and parent to have input into the selection process but also allows the director to have control of the future instrumentation
- Together as a team (teacher plus student), decide what instrument is the best fit. Circle the final choice on the preference form and keep for your records.
- Visit with your Palen Music Center representative regarding final instrumentation numbers, method book, and any special requests. Verify the time, date, and location of the rental night.
- Continue to remind students and parents of the rental night date by sending multiple flyers, email announcements, and verbal reminders.

## INSTRUMENT RENTAL NIGHT

- Have the instrument display night with your Palen Music Center representative. Consider having a few high school band or orchestra members present to assist as needed. Duties could include welcoming parents, directing them to the meeting site, giving tours of the school or music facility, assigning student lockers, labelling instrument cases, etc.
- If possible, don't let the students take the instruments home the night of the display. You might even limit their access to their horns for a week while you are teaching instrument assembly and basic fundamentals.
- For students who miss the rental night, direct the parents to the PMC online rental portal ([palenmusic.com/rent](http://palenmusic.com/rent)). Set a cut-off date for students to get instruments. Your PMC representative can provide you with info sheets to hand to those students with instructions on how to get their instrument.

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- Remember that other classroom teachers may be impacted by your recruiting efforts. Keep these questions in mind:
  - When will you be speaking with the students?
  - Have the classroom teachers been notified?
  - When does the daily rehearsal schedule begin?
  - How is the teacher's daily schedule affected before the band or orchestra classes actually start for the year?
- Plan on multiple channels of communication with the parents (school newsletter, emails, flyers, student announcements, etc.). Multiple reminders are necessary in order to ensure quality participation.

We hope that these ideas are helpful. We continue to collect suggestions from the hundreds of teachers we serve. If you have more ideas on how to build a successful beginning program, or if you have questions regarding the information provided here, please contact your Palen Music Center representative.

