

Northern California Band Association

Parade Judges Educational Packet

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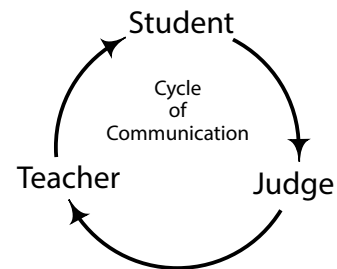
August 25, 2018

Judges' Role – The Cycle of Communication

As we begin this study course, it is important to examine what is expected of us in the role of **Judge**. For the purpose of perspective, let's recall the reasons we chose to become a judge in the first place:

Typically, we come directly from this activity as performers, instructors, or directors. Many of us have had the opportunity to be adjudicated ourselves. It is through our similar backgrounds that we understand that we exist for *those whom we adjudicate*. The student performers and their directors are at the *foundation* of this activity.

To help us understand how, and *when*, we contribute to the learning process, consider the following model showing the **cycle of communication** between directors, students, and judge:



When you accept the role of adjudicator, you knowingly exchange your “director” badge with a “judge” badge – taking on yet *another key player* position in the cycle. Your ability to communicate clearly and effectively with the units is as important to this cycle as your ability to rank and rate. Communicate your critique using the WHO, WHAT, and HOW (see page 3).

Staying Current

As the units grow and evolve, you too must grow and evolve. They wait in anticipation for your spoken critiques, and react accordingly, week after week, show after show. Your ability to recognize, appreciate and reward their continued efforts is paramount. By understanding your responsibility to stay current with this ever-evolving activity, you will be better able to serve them in their quest for greatness.

Judges' Professionalism

1. **Act the part.** You are always a judge, even when the contest is over or before it has begun; even in non-activity situations. People will take your casual comments out of context or place greater value on them than you wish. Know this and be prudent in what you say or do.
2. **Be prepared.** Present a heightened image of yourself. Be well groomed and professionally dressed. Be punctual.
3. **Watch your actions.** Body posture or gestures or side comments during judging are ALWAYS observed, often misunderstood and usually detracts from the credibility of the judge.
4. **Watch your politics.** Leave old bias, anger or axes to grind outside the arena. Leave last year behind and bring to the students the best and most open attitude you can. The students are not responsible for the foolish politics of adults. Be sensitive to your relationship within the activity. Keep friendships out of decision making – this breeds distrust faster than anything.

Judges' Standards

1. An unquestioned sense of ethics, standards, and professionalism.
2. A strong understanding of the activity, its goals, values, and direction.
3. A full and comprehensive understanding of the caption(s) and application of criteria.
4. Strong in-depth recognition skills.
5. Well-developed communication skills relative to taped observation.
6. An open mind and an educational approach to adjudication.
7. The ability to function within a team.

Communication Points

1. Stay in caption!
2. Your tone of voice reflects your attitude and your personality.
3. Be present and energetic in your commentary whether it is the first or last band of the show. Every unit deserves your full attention and energy.
4. Practice with the recorder. Make practice tapes while watching YouTube videos. Make sure you speak slow enough to be understood. Listen to your tapes. You are often your harshest critic. Use this to your benefit to give accurate and intelligent commentary so that others can understand your intent as well.
5. Judge what you see, not what you *want* to see. Relate what the band is doing back to the criteria sheet.
6. Avoid long gaps of silence in your commentary and DO NOT give silent tapes. At the very least, a judge can communicate WHAT they are seeing/hearing a band doing/ attempting.
7. Complete your thoughts and be specific. Remember: WHO you are commenting on, WHAT they are doing, HOW - at what level are they achieving it. (WHO, WHAT, HOW)
8. Balance your tape with both “positive” **and** “negative” observations. Do not “sugar coat” your commentary and only offer a tape full of praise. Do not “nit-pick” a band to death and offer only a tape full of negative comments.
9. Your tape will be heard by numerous people and will be a form of documentation. Frame your comments in a way that can be heard by anyone (instructors, students, directors, parents, school administrators). Indeed, this expands your impact beyond what was noted in the Cycle of Communication (page 1).
10. EDUCATE. Remember to frame comments positively. Criticism should be constructive. Find at least one element a unit is doing well and applaud them for it. Remember, your job is to give information to help the unit grow over the course of the season as well as down the road for future seasons to come.
11. Communicate with your judging colleagues and ask for feedback. Learn from each other and find ways to improve your own commentary and observation skills.

SUGGESTED READING: “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie

A quick glance tool for effective classifying and scoring of units

Judges, please use the following quick-glance “key-term” criteria sheet to refer to key box elements/criteria for each caption. This will help with accurate scoring within each box.

Remember...

- Judges scores must reflect the “box elements” a group displays.
- Judges must be accountable for every score they give a group
- Effective taped commentary should reflect the score per the box criteria.

Music

Musicianship

- Expression/Interpretation
- Ensemble
- Dynamics
- Phrasing/Nuance
- Control
- Tone Quality
- Intonation

Blend and Balance

- Woodwinds
- Brass
- Percussion

Technical Aspects

- Facility
- Technique
- Precision - notes/tempo
- Articulation

Accuracy

- Articulation
- Attacks
- Releases
- Rhythmic Accuracy
- Note Accuracy

Musical Content

- Exposure to Error
- Appropriate Literature
- Key Difficulty
- Rhythmic Demand / Suitability for Group

Box 1 <i>Applies</i>	Box 2 <i>Understands</i>	Box 3 <i>Knows</i>	Box 4 <i>Develops</i>	Box 5 <i>Discovers</i>
Superior	Excellent	Good	Growing	Limited

Showmanship

Attached Units: (Drum Major, Color Guard, Thematic Personnel)

- Staging - Line of sight/Coordination with Band Proper
- Pacing/Flow and Continuity
- Musical Interpretation and Blend of Form/Body/Equipment
- Technical Proficiency/Recovery Skills

Drum Major:

- Opening/Control of Unity
- Precision of Step
- Posture/Carriage/Confidence

Uniforms:

- Color Coordination
- Neatness & Grooming / Fit / Uniformity
- Adhesion to Style (Band, Drum Major, Attached Units)

Visual:

- Control of Step Off
- Spacing/Alignment
- Posture/Carriage
- Instrument Position
- Exposure to Error - M & M
- Precision of Step/Clarity and Style
- Esprit De Corps

Musicality:

- Audio Performance
- Dynamics
- Phrasing
- Blend/Balance/Intonation
- Visual Presentation to Audio Performance
- Dynamic Interpretation
- Phrasing Interpretation
- Form Changes
- Expression
- Musical Challenge
- Suitability
- Audience Appeal

Box 1 <i>Applies</i>	Box 2 <i>Understands</i>	Box 3 <i>Knows</i>	Box 4 <i>Develops</i>	Box 5 <i>Discovers</i>
Superior	Excellent	Good	Growing	Limited

Marching

Ensemble Marching Technique

- Ranks and Columns
- Diagonals
- Distance and Intervals
- Step Style and Step Size

Individual Marching Technique

- Posture/Carriage
- Discipline
- Pride and Bearing
- Individual Alignment
- Instrument and Equipment Angle
- Out of Phase / Out of Step

Exposure to Error

- Size of Intervals
- Size of Distance
- Configuration of the Block
- Difficulty of Auxiliary Marching Routine

Box 1 <i>Applies</i>	Box 2 <i>Understands</i>	Box 3 <i>Knows</i>	Box 4 <i>Develops</i>	Box 5 <i>Discovers</i>
Superior	Excellent	Good	Growing	Limited

Achievement Commentary

Because it is common to see and hear a large range of ability levels within the NCBA bands, it is important for judges to have commentary tools to talk about achievement. It can be tough to talk about achievement when students lack training and/or when achievement is marginal or non-existent. It's also a challenge to make sure your commentary is of educational and scoring significance. Below are suggested ways in which you might discuss achievement on your tapes. Of course, commentary can be done in many alternative ways.

1. **The band is significantly weak, training is not apparent** = Achievement is impaired due to an apparent lack of training. (OR) Achievement would definitely grow if training and accuracy were demonstrated more. (OR) Achievement issues suggest a concern about the students' general compatibility to the program.
2. **The band is inconsistent in terms of training and excellence from member to member** = There is an inconsistent degree of achievement – some performers are fairly strong, and others definitely not up to that level.
3. **The band shows moderate training but seems to be suffering from “errors.”** = Achievement from a training perspective is moderate and growing; work on individual errors to enhance excellence.
4. **Portions of the show are well-achieved while other portions are still weak.** = There are sporadic moments of achievement that show real promise; work for a consistent demonstration of skills throughout. Training would support this development.
5. **Composition surpasses the students' ability to achieve.** = Students are struggling to achieve the material they have been given. Training is recognizable up to a point but doesn't yet seem to support the composition.
6. **The band seems to be right on target in performing what they have been given.** = Good achievement overall – performers' training definitely seems to be compatible to the composition.
7. **The band, while technically sound, is lacking in expressive qualities.** = While achievement is impressive at a technical level, students seem to lack the awareness of expressive opportunities. Overall achievement will be enriched when they demonstrate expressive qualities.
8. **The band is excellent and surpasses the composition.** = Impressive and consistent achievement throughout supports strong training both technically and expressively. Full achievement offers you the opportunity to enrich the composition should that be appropriate.

Commentary Scenario - Music

In the introduction and first strain there is a trombone player or two over playing, splatting and dominating the sound. You can not hear the other voices. The triplets are labored and the notes are not being held full value. Balance, tone and intonation are significant issues as are correct notes.

An effective recorded comment will encompass all of the following key elements below (A-C). If there is a recurring problem and or positive quality, a judge may reiterate that information in their wrap-up comments at the end of the recording as a way to encompass recurring concerns or accolades throughout the program. The key below will be used to illustrate commentary effectiveness for the scenario.

Initial Judge Observations (In your head)

- This band is way out of balance and I can't hear other voices
- The intonation and tone can't be developed until right notes are achieved

Key

- A. **Who:** Pinpoints the specific section the judge is speaking about
- B. **What:** Recognizes fully what element is being demonstrated
- C. **How:** Recognizes fully at what level that element is being achieved

Music Commentary Scenario	A	B	C
"This could sound better..."			
"Trombones, be careful."	X		
"Trombones, check note accuracy on the descending line."	X	X	
"In the intro, check note length and intonation in the descending line within the trombones, and make sure we can hear supporting parts in other sections. Right now we can barely hear the supporting bass line in the tubas, or the chordal accompaniment. Breath support could be enhanced to increase a better sense of tone quality throughout. All band members need to be aware of their role in the music to balance the parts."	X	X	X

Commentary Scenario - Showmanship

There is a color guard with flags, rifles and letters. The uniforms are thematically consistent and presented well. The drum major drops and recovers well on their opening flourishes. Band and guard react to the whistle and start the march and the routine.

Initial Judge Observations (In your head)

- Too bad the drum major dropped
- They look good and uniform in appearance
- Color guard has good ideas but is not together
- The intonation and tone can't be developed until right notes are achieved

Key

A. Who: Pinpoints the specific section the judge is speaking about

B. What: Recognizes fully what element is being demonstrated

C. How: Recognizes fully at what level that element is being achieved

Showmanship Commentary Scenario	A	B	C
"Nice colors...."			
"The color guard looks nice."	X		
" I like that the color guard responds to the whistles, roll-off, and the intro to the march."	X	X	
" Good recovery from the drum major's drop. The guard is nicely staged, but their response to the whistle and roll-off would be more effective with more accuracy with regard to timing and placement of equipment and body shapings. The overall band sound in the intro is affected by wrong notes. Once the correct notes are achieved you can get to the next level of blend and balance."	X	X	X

Commentary Scenario - Marching

This band is passing in front of the judges stand in a traditional forward marching block

Initial Judge Observations (In your head)

- Folks are out of step and out of line
- Their horn angles are pretty good
- Some training is evident

Key

- A. Who:** Pinpoints the specific section the judge is speaking about
B. What: Recognizes fully what element is being demonstrated
C. How: Recognizes fully at what level that element is being achieved

Marching Commentary Scenario	A	B	C
"Ooh, watch it!"			
"Front rank, watch it!"	X		
"There are two out-of-step in the front rank."	X	X	
"Inconsistent step size and phasing has contributed to some out-of-steps in the front rank. This is sometimes caused by not knowing the music. For the majority of the band, the horn angles are not too bad – but there are inconsistencies in the upper body carriage. There is evidence of training for some of the members in the block, but every member needs to display that training in order to achieve a greater level of precision."	X	X	X

A Student Centered System

Within the nature of the band and pageantry activity as a whole, it is easy to get caught up with such trivial elements as competition (whose band beat who) and negative bad mouthing of other teams, instructors, directors, and judges.

As effective adjudicators, we must remind ourselves that we are all on the same team as instructors and directors in serving our primary figure: THE STUDENT. Judges should remind themselves and each other that whenever they are at a review, they are there for one reason: THE STUDENTS.

THE STUDENT IS...

- ...the basis of the band activity. Without them, there would be no need for a review, competition, or our association
- ...not a score, placement or a trophy – but instead a flesh and blood human being with feelings and emotions like our own.
- ...not someone to be tolerated so that we can be important. THEY are our primary focus.
- ...a young person who seeks our guidance, support, and modeling so they can grow and be successful in the pageantry activity and beyond.
- ...the purpose of our work. We are not doing them a favor by serving them. They are doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.

Remember...

It's about the educational system and the students!