

## Things I Have Learned on My First Job that I Did Not Learn in School

### Context

- Orchestra grades 5-12—Class A high school—6 buildings

### Applicable in Every Job

- Change how you speak about yourself. You are no longer a student.
- Be willing to admit that you do not know how everything works at the school yet.
- Hit the ground running. What you may consider “getting your feet wet” is wasted time for your students.
- Have a “gig” bag. Fill it with strings, rock stops, rosin, band aids, Kleenex, etc.
- Make a program template (or two) early in the year and use it for everything.
- Your music parents can be your lifesavers. Respect them and keep them happy.
- Do not lie to your students for one year and keep a tradition that is detrimental to the program.
- Test your students over the hardest passages of music.
- Be nothing but rainbows and sunshine to the support staff. They will consistently go out of the way to save you if they like you.
- Be comfortable *talking* about money.
- Do not let paperwork pile up. The people who have to collect your paperwork are on a deadline as well.
- FTE stands for Full-Time Equivalency. A 1-hour class that meets every day is usually worth .2 FTE. If your class does not meet every day, you will usually get a .1 FTE.

### Unique to Orchestra

- Always have extra sponges, rubber bands, rosin, and electrical tape.
- If you can purchase things, carbon fiber bows for public school are amazing.
- A lot of music shops that are great for band instruments carry string instruments and string supplies. However, never encourage your students to patronize a shop that does not have a dedicated string repair workshop.
- Teach students what makes a good instrument very early. There are companies making violins with particle board and plastic now.

### Unique to Traveling Positions

- These are amazing!
- You have more autonomy over your day than almost any other teacher.
- Have AAA or an equivalent because you may have to deal with keys locked in the car, flat tires, etc.
- Always leave plenty of time to travel between buildings.
- You will have access to more buildings than almost any other teacher in the district, so be responsible with your keys.

**Once you are hired, you are employee, and this is your job. Do your job, and do it well. The rest will fall into place.**

*Amanda Thoms*  
*Midland Public Schools—Orchestra Teacher*  
*thomsam@mps.k12.mi.us*