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vision. The students were accustomed to a style of teaching that put an emphasis on student autonomy but without guidance.

"No matter how much the students fight it, and although you may lose a student or two along the way, kids like to be pushed," Lange said. "I could be the coolest person in the world, but if we don't come out and put on a good concert or play a solid night of pep band, no one will want to join our program. No matter how much fun you have in class, no one wants to go out, perform, and be embarrassed."

At the same time, Lange has adopted a policy of transparency coupled with specific expectations and accountability.

"When I started, I had a handbook. The students understood that simply showing up to class didn't qualify for an A in my class. Not that it's hard to get an A, but you have to earn it," she said. "This made the kids nervous at first, and although I still don't think they all love it, we at least know where everyone stands. The students knew from the beginning that I'm a big softy, but when I mean something, I mean it. I only have their best interest in mind."

"Sometimes, I'm too honest," Lange continued. "I tell them that I don't like to call people out, that you'll probably get a lot of chances, and that you can talk as long as we can bring it back together again. I try to strive off of a mutual respect between myself and the students. Often, you will hear from mentors that it is best to come out and be really tough and loosen things as you go. It is always harder to gain control after you've lost it. Even though I completely agree with this, it does not match my personality. I need to have a relationship with people before I feel like I can be really firm with them. Granted, when I came in, I was still twice as strict as the previous band director."

Still, Lange hasn't banished the need for students to feel a sense of autonomy. She finds that discipline needs not suffer in the goal of empowering students.

"We work on compromise," Lange said. "If I truly had my way, we would be doing all classical music and really striving for the soul behind the music. This is a really big idea to try to teach to students who, in years past, voted a piece of music out that they didn't like. So, we have pop concerts to do music that the kids know well, and we continue to work toward understanding and appreciation of music that isn't heard on the top 10 list on the

radio."

She pushes her students to work through songs they may not like, songs that they would have refused to learn in years past, and instead to learn to play them well. As a result, the students went out "for our first few pep band games, got everyone in the band to show up, play as one, and they completely blew away the community with what they could really play like, because they worked together," Lange said. "Following our very first pep band performance my first year of teaching, I cannot count the compliments I received from many members of the community. The community likes seeing a full band there having fun and playing together. They expressed how much they missed it and how proud it made them feel to hear their band at these games with neighboring towns there to compete."

As a result, the attendance at concerts has increased, as well, to where community members whose children aren't involved in the ensembles are also coming to enjoy and support the music program. In addition, the Bloomfield music program receives many calls asking for small student groups to perform for community meetings and special events.

"Sometimes, people argue that people don't come to music concerts because the community can't get involved in the way they can at a ball game," Lange said. "Music really provides an important opportunity for community service. Bloomfield's mission statement is all about teaching our students to be responsible citizens."

Lange thanks the community for their support, both in appreciation of the students' hard work and payoffs in enjoyable music, and through their financial contributions. Last year, the community of Bloomfield gave nearly \$10,000 to buy risers for the choir. The Bloomfield music program also added an annual fundraiser, the Music Dinner Showcase, in which students serve lasagna to patrons and then entertain them with their work. This school year's Music Dinner Showcase will be held on St. Patrick's Day in March of 2013.

### *Where the Credit Lies*

Lange is humbled by the revitalization of the Bloomfield music program. She welcomes the praise and the appreciation. But, like any good coach, she prefers and does her best work behind the scenes.

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