

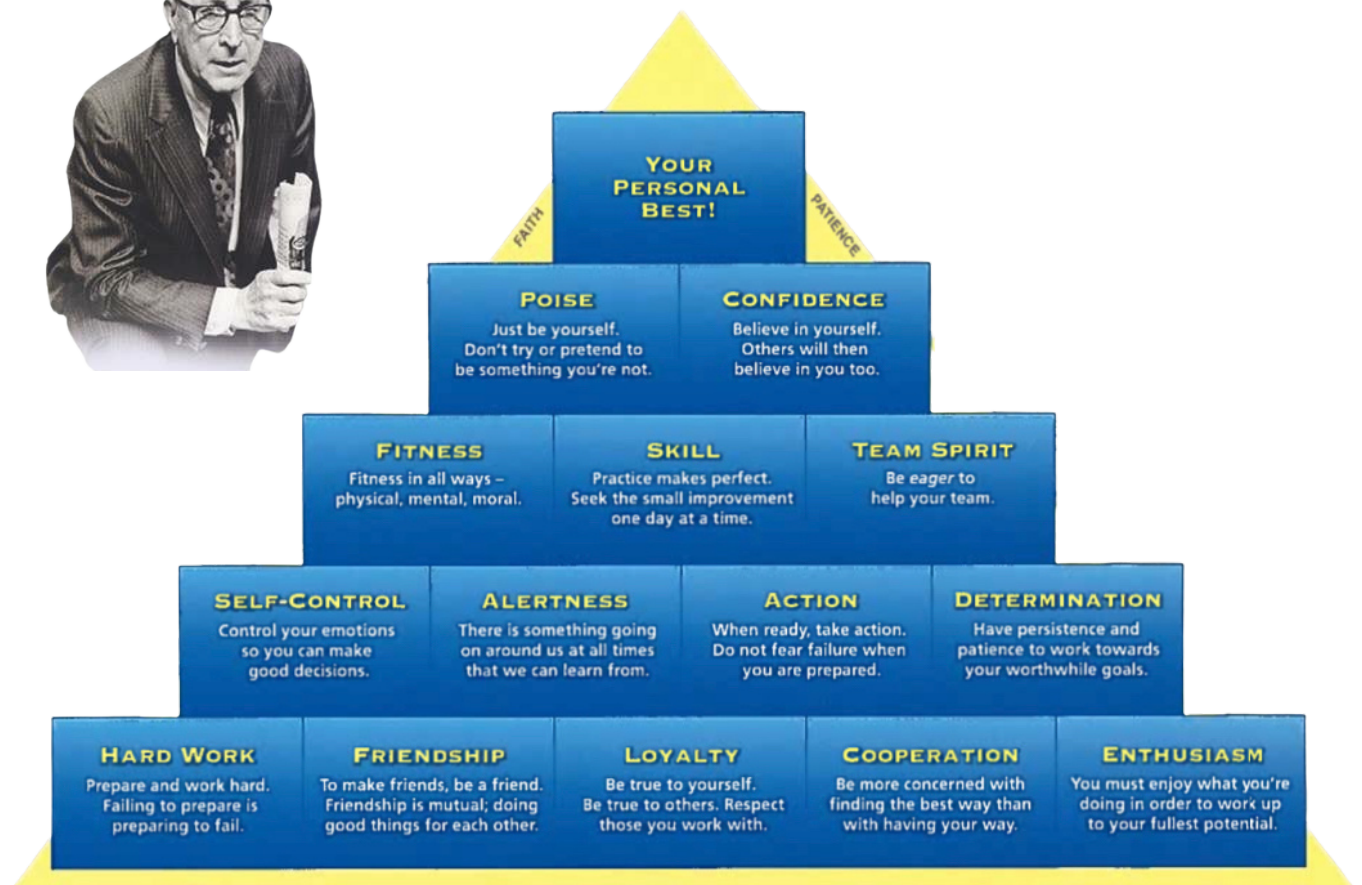
THE PYRAMID OF SUCCESS

BY BRETT PALEN



I have been privileged to have the opportunity to lead many different teams over the past 38 years. In addition to leading Palen Music Center, I have directed high school band and percussion programs, coached high school and college basketball, as well as high school golf. One of my leadership heroes is John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach at UCLA. Just a few of Coach Wooden's coaching records include 10 National Championships (7 consecutive), 38 straight NCAA tournament wins, 88 consecutive victories and 4 undefeated seasons. None of these records will likely ever be eclipsed. He was truly one of the best leaders of all time. When he wasn't coaching, he was an English teacher, and his former players tell stories of him reading poetry to the team before and after practice!

One of the "gold mines" found within the pages of his book entitled, "Wooden on Leadership" is his "Pyramid of Success." Whether directing a band, coaching sports or leading a business, I have found this pyramid to be an indispensable resource for building strong and successful organizations.



Here is how to use the pyramid:

- Start with the cornerstones. For 1 minute each day during week 1, talk about hard work (the importance of every team member working hard, being fully engaged, totally focused and completely absorbed). Each day during week 2, talk for 1 minute about enthusiasm (truly enjoying what you're doing).
- Spend weeks 3-5 speaking about the remaining 3 blocks of the foundation of the pyramid. Friendship, loyalty and cooperation. The way your organization's members interact with one another and the resulting culture determines the foundational strength of the group.
- Spend 1 minute per day, 1 block per week (weeks 6-9) training students on self control, alertness, action and determination.
- On week 10 talk with students on the importance of conditioning the embouchure, the body and the mind. During week 11 talk about skill development and conclude the 12-week program with team spirit.

The foundational blocks in the pyramid deal with the heart of the team members. The 2nd row pertains to the head and the 3rd row focuses on physical skill development. It is Coach Wooden's theory that when the bottom 3 rows of the pyramid are evident in a person's life, the top 3 blocks (poise, confidence and competitive greatness) will happen automatically. For more information on the teaching points surrounding each block in the pyramid, please refer to part 1 of the book or feel free to reach out to me at dbpalen@palenmusic.com.

Because of the time constraints we all face as leaders, it is extremely tempting to spend all our time developing a player's skills and neglecting the matters of the heart and head but I can assure you that just 1 minute each day reinforcing these behaviors will pay huge dividends for your organization. It has been my experience that it takes time and repetition before kids can connect with this information but given enough time they will see the power in applying these principles to their lives. Many of you are certainly already teaching some version of this and have witnessed the great bond that is developed between directors, staff and students when these skills are taught.

Most of us entered this field because of our love for music but we stayed in it because we loved making a difference in the lives of our students through music.

Keep up the exceptional work!



Chief Executive Officer
Palen Music Center



its about kids!