

## YOU & YOUR LOCAL MUSIC STORE

As a modern day music educator, you have a lot on your plate. You choose music for your various groups, plan concerts, festivals and half-time shows; perhaps teach non-music classes. No wonder many teachers feel it is easier to order their instruments and accessories on-line. After all, you only have to point-and-click for what you need, enter a purchase order number, then a credit card number and "Voila", your order is placed.

However, there are a number of reasons for establishing a relationship with your local music store, whether they are large or small. If you, or your students, have an immediate need for accessories, such as lubricants, reeds, drumsticks or heads, your local music store can be your best resource. Talk to the owner or manager to find out exactly what they carry and what the price to the school would be. Generally, you can negotiate a price the same as, or close to, those offered by on-line discount sites.

You should also find out what brands of instruments the store stocks, sells and rents to students. If the store carries brands unknown to you, this is your opportunity to examine and/or try out these instruments and see how they compare in quality and price to the major brands. I, personally, still recommend major brand student instruments, but if you are on a tight budget, there are some up-and-coming brands of a decent quality at a lower price point.

Other than providing instruments and accessories, there are other ways a local store can support your program. Many stores provide an in-store technician to handle instrument repairs. A service like this is invaluable for any band and orchestra program. The only way to get warranty repairs done, from on-line stores, is to send the instrument to them, or the factory, which can take days or weeks. That is not acceptable when you have a parade or concert the day after a student's instrument fails. The store may provide the student a loaner instrument if it cannot be fixed by the performance date.

Another service a local store can support you is by having a booth set up at a multi-school festival or competition you are hosting. They could supply needed accessories and repairs for participating students, thereby easing stress and disappointment for the student and teacher.

Many stores will also support their local school by purchasing ads in the schools music and sports programs, supplying music folders at little or no cost, hosting clinics and posting in-store support for your upcoming concert or festival. You may have various ideas to co-op with your local store. Even if the store seems to lean more toward guitars, amps and drums, they can still be helpful to your program. How about a P.A. system you may need for an upcoming festival or a back line of amps and drums for your concert?

Private music instructors often work out of studios housed at your local music store. Even if you don't personally know every instructor, having a good relationship with the store can give insight about the likely quality of instruction. Stores with good management and well-kept, professional- looking lesson rooms, are more likely to have (and keep) quality instructors. Those instructors can be a great resource if you need a clinician to work with one of your sections.

These are just a few of the services a local store may offer you. That is why it is in the best interest for all to be acquainted with your local music merchant. With today's economy, many stores are willing to closely compete with Internet pricing and are, more than ever, willing to accept school orders, even if the profit margins are much lower.

Visit your local store soon and find out what they are able to offer you.