From Chaos to Sanity

Last summer at the Colorado Bandmaster's Association summer workshop, I attended a great clinic by Andrea Hollenbeck called "From Chaos to Sanity." Little did I realize that I was about to witness an incredibly comprehensive (and free!) resource for music educators of young students. This great resource is available at [www.bandlifebalance.weebly.com](http://www.bandlifebalance.weebly.com/). I spent some time talking with Andrea about what led her to develop this resource and how she went about it.

SBO: What was the impetus that led you to start working on this project?

AH: I believe time is our greatest gift. I love life, and I love learning from students and everyone around me. My primary intention was to optimize time in each day and create a tool for others to do the same. We travel through different seasons in our lives, ranging from the first years of teaching, marriage, children, unforeseen medical procedures, family demands, and unexpected life challenges. In each of these different seasons, the daily schedule may change. I wanted to open up time for everyone, so no matter your age or season in life, you will have enough energy at the end of the day for self-love and self-care.

SBO: What was the process? In other words, what steps did you go through? Perhaps the monthly to-do list first, as an example, that eventually led to the lesson plans, etc.?

AH: I wanted to challenge myself by journaling a summary of every class, every day, for the entire school year. I wanted to find a way to stop reinventing the wheel, for example, digging for that video that was an "aha!" or motivator for the students. I translated that daily journal into a website to be more efficient.

SBO: I assume it's a living process. How often do you revise/update?

AH: Everything is connected. I wanted to streamline the process and knowing it was a lot of information I link live documents so I only "touch it once." By using and adding live links, it keeps the website updated and revised without my having to do much editing.

SBO: Did you receive, or are you receiving input from others (students, colleagues)?

AH: Not really. I translated notes from the notebook as I taught throughout the year. I have two colleagues that taught high school for many years and used the website during their first and second years of teaching middle school. They helped with feedback.

SBO: You could probably make money from this great resource. Why not?

AH: That thought hasn't crossed my mind! I really just did it to help myself thrive, and it seemed natural to share it with my colleagues.

SBO: Do you have "next steps" in mind?

AH: For the compositions, I want to link student video examples to the composition rubrics. Other than that, I hope to keep learning and growing as a music educator. As I find new and better ways to teach, I will incorporate them.

         In reviewing the "From Chaos to Sanity" website, the planning method that I found most helpful was the monthly to-do calendar. It helps provide milestones that will keep you ahead of events instead of being in perpetual catch-up. Backward planning is not a new thing to successful music educators, but often that comes from years of experience (and learning from failures). What a fantastic gift it is for new teachers to have this resource! The checklists alone would have made it worthwhile, but the weekly and daily lesson plans and the numerous live links to videos and other resources make it even more powerful. As a side note, in the September 2018 SBO issue, I introduced a web resource called "Sound Like This." It can be found at [www.ThomasPalmatier.com](http://www.thomaspalmatier.com/) and has links to fantastic videos for every instrument in the band and orchestra. I mention the web resource because, in the last few weeks, that page has gotten a huge amount of traffic, mostly from teachers using it as a way to show their students what they could sound like and to get them excited about playing in band and orchestra. If you're on that page, don't miss clicking on Genghis Barbies playing "Sweet Dreams are Made of These." All of your students will want to play French Horn!

         Back to Andrea Hollenbeck's website. Would you like to learn more about it? You're in luck because Andrea will be presenting at the Midwest Clinic at 12:00-1:00 on Wednesday, December 18th. Be sure to attend her clinic if you're going to Chicago.